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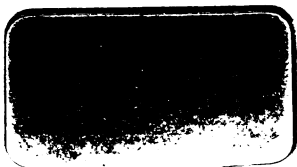
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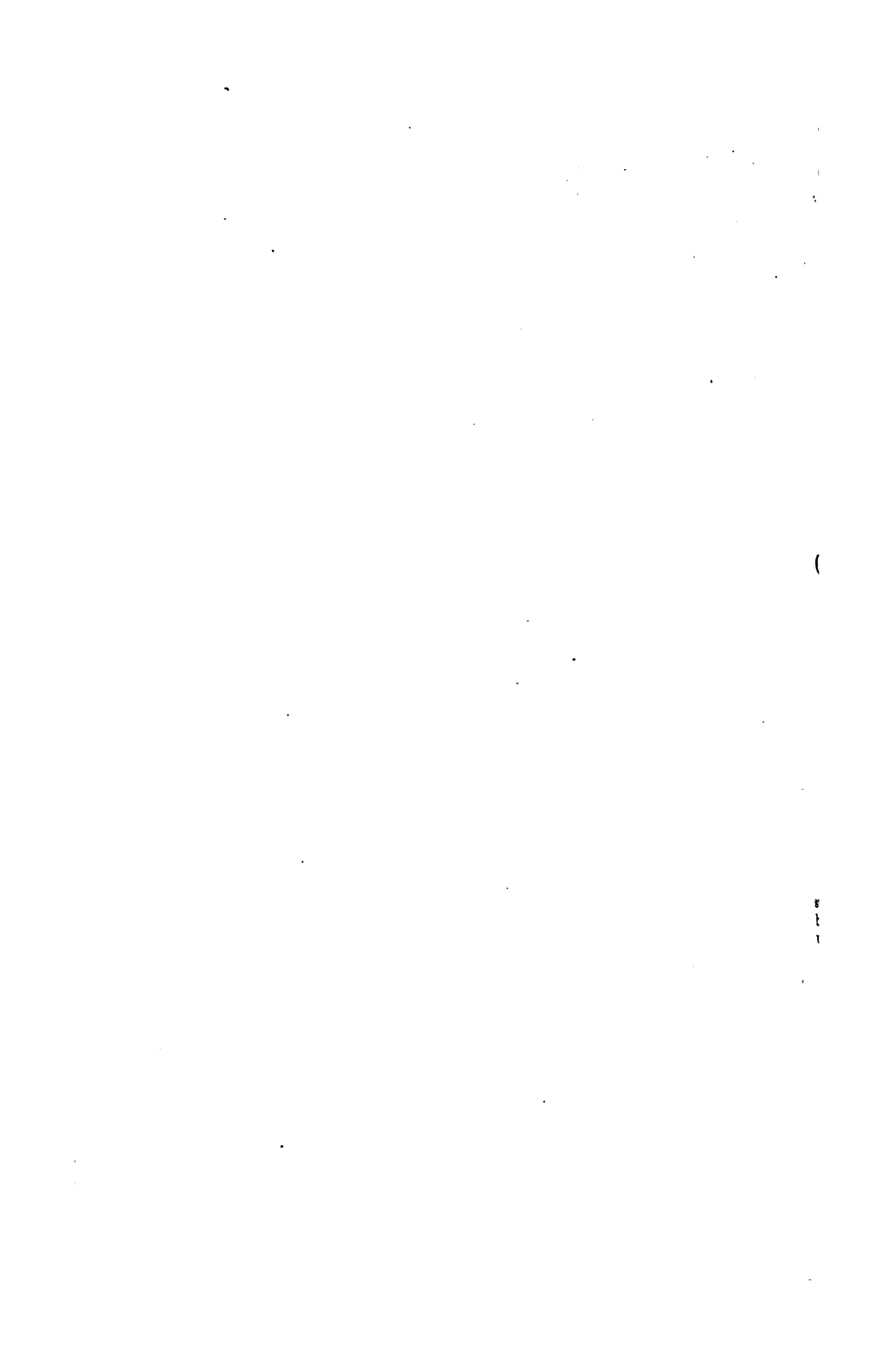
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THE
COTTAGER'S GUIDE
TO THE
NEW TESTAMENT;
THAT IS,
THE LIFE AND DOCTRINE
OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,
PLAINLY SET FORTH
—
VOL. IV.
—
BY THE REV. ALEXANDER DALLAS, A. M.



RECTOR OF WONSTON, HANTS.

“ Whom shall he teach knowledge ; and whom shall he make to understand doctrine ? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line ; here a little, and there a little.” Isa. xxviii. 9, 10.

“ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor.” Luke iv. 18.

“ To the poor the Gospel is preached.” Luke vii. 22.

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE FOURTH VOLUME OF THE

COTTAGER'S GUIDE TO THE NEW TESTAMENT.



WE have now gone through such a portion of the Gospel History, as brings the account of the Life and Doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ to within six months of the time of his death. The first eighteen chapters of St. Matthew, the first ten chapters of St. Mark, to the fifteenth verse of the ninth chapter of St. Luke, and to the first verse of the seventh chapter of St. John, have all been explained and applied. This has brought us to an important point. Neither St. Matthew nor St. Mark tells us any thing more, until just a short time before the crucifixion of Jesus. But St. John, who had mentioned very little of what the others tell us in the former part, takes up the story where they leave it; and from the seventh to the eleventh chapters of his Gospel, he gives a particular account of our Lord's discourses, and of what took place for the first half of the remaining six months. Then St. Luke goes on with the account, and carries it forward in nine chapters; telling us what Jesus said and did during the rest of the time. As the great event approaches, St. Matthew and St. Mark join St. Luke in carrying on the Gospel History; and St. John begins again with the account of what took place just six days before the crucifixion. All the four Gospels speak of the circumstances during the last week of our Lord's life, and continue the history together until the end.

The Gospels speak much more fully of our Lord's actions and discourses during the last six months of his life, than during all the former part; and in consequence, there is about as much more to be explained in setting forth this last period, as has already been explained. The point

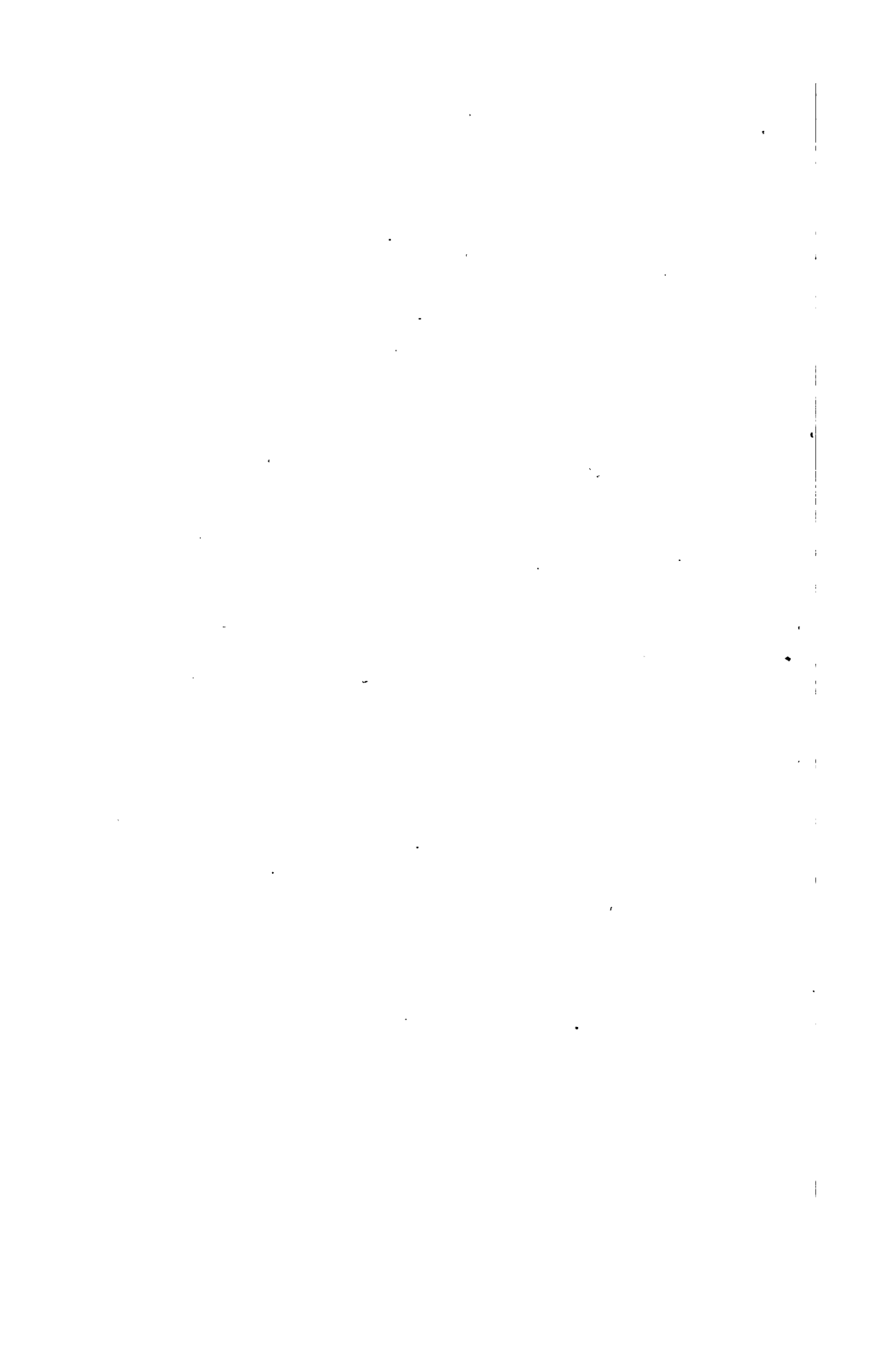
therefore to which we are come, makes an appropriate division in the book : so that the three First Volumes of the Cottager's Guide to the New Testament may be considered as the First Division of the work, and we are now beginning a second. At such a point it is fitting to give thanks to God, for having permitted the work to be carried on so far ; and to pray to Him that it may proceed with His blessing, in order that it may be used to the glory of the name of Jesus, in helping to instruct His people.

It sometimes happens, that even well disposed persons find it more difficult to remember the exact particulars of the New Testament history, than to recollect the details of almost any other book. Perhaps one reason for this is, that reading part of the History in one Gospel, and another part in another, and finding the same thing often repeated in different Gospels, they do not gather a clear notion of the whole story ; nor are they able to connect the doctrines, taught in our Lord's discourses, with the particular circumstances and situations in which they were spoken. It has been one great object of the Cottager's Guide to the New Testament to help the reader in getting such a clear notion of the whole Gospel History, as will remedy this evil. It was with this view that a notice was placed at the end of the former Division of the work, giving a short outline of the general points of History in the three Volumes ; and also a statement of the places, as well as the times, at which the different events occurred. A Table of Contents was also given with each Volume. By these means, a regular account of the course in which every thing happened may easily be brought to the mind ; and such a regular account, when clearly kept in memory, will be found one of the greatest helps in studying the Gospel History, and in getting a habit of readily applying it to the feelings and circumstances of our own lives. With a view still further to assist the reader in this way, the above particulars will in future be placed at the head of each portion : so that before beginning the portion the

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reader may be informed of the circumstances to which it relates, the place where they occurred, and the time at which they happened. It will also be more easy to find out any particular subject for reading.

A further assistance in the study of the New Testament may also be obtained, by arranging the principal circumstances and instructions of our Lord under such heads as make them more easy to remember. This has been done by arranging and numbering all our Lord's MIRACLES—all his PARABLES—all his DISCOURSES—and all his CONVERSATIONS. When a portion contains any one of these it will be mentioned in the heading; and a list of the whole, in each of the four classes, will be given at the end of each Volume.



THE
COTTAGER'S GUIDE,
&c.

ONE HUNDRED & TENTH PORTION.

Jesus tells his relations why he did not go openly to the Feast of Tabernacles ; and when they were gone, follows them privately.—*Conversation, No. 31.*

PLACE. *Capernaum, and Jerusalem.*

TIME—*In the third year of our Lord's ministry, about six months before His death. Year of the common calculation, 29.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St John's Gospel, c. vii. ver. 2 to 13.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

JOHN vii. verse

9. *abode means here remained*

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Our Lord has now been absent from Jerusalem for about eighteen months ; not having been at any of the feasts since his attendance at the Pass-over, of which an account was given in the 47th, 48th, and 49th portions. (vol. ii., page 37, &c.) We have seen in the course of the history that the malice of his enemies made it necessary for him to act with great caution ; and for this reason he remained at a distance from Jerusalem, the place where they had the greatest power. One of the principal Jewish festivals was just about to take place ; this was the feast of Tabernacles, or (as

it is called in the book of Exodus) the feast of in-gathering. It was one of the three great festivals at which every male Jew was required to go and worship at Jerusalem; and it was meant to be a thanksgiving to God for the gathering of the fruits of the land, and also a remembrance that the Israelites had once lived in tents, and under the boughs of trees, while they were in the wilderness after being brought out of Egypt. (Exod. xxiii. 16, 17; xxxiv. 22, 23. Lev. xxiii. 34—43. Numb. xxix. 12—39. Deut. xvi. 13—16. Ezra iii. 4. Neh. viii. 14—18.)

The family of Mary the mother of Jesus settled in Capernaum, as has been already shewn. (vol. i. page 160; vol. ii. page 154.) His nearest relations (called his "brethren") did not believe him to be the Christ, in spite of all they had seen and heard of him. They had already tried to hinder his preaching, because they thought he was not in his right mind (Mark iii. 21); and they had not been convinced by what had since happened. They seem to have been particularly offended because he had latterly kept himself as private as possible; and more especially because he had not attended the festivals. They took the occasion of this feast of Tabernacles to speak to him on the subject; and advised him to go to Jerusalem, in order that the people who followed his ministry might have an opportunity of being confirmed in his doctrine, by observing the miracles that he worked. They plainly told him their reasons for this. It appeared to them to be unsuitable for him to keep himself so private, while he professed to be the Christ. This was not the usual way of acting; no person would think

of hiding what he did, as a means of becoming publicly known. If Jesus worked such miracles, why did he not let himself be seen by anybody?

Our Lord answered his relations by merely telling them that it was not yet the proper time for him to draw upon himself public attention, he therefore could not go in a public manner to the festival at Jerusalem. It was very different with them: they might go to the festivals at any time without impropriety or danger. The Scribes and Pharisees, and the general body of the worldly-minded Jews, had no reason to oppose or annoy these relations of his, who were of one mind with themselves (John xv. 19): but they did oppose and bear violent malice against Jesus, because his preaching was continually exposing the sinfulness of their conduct. He told his relations therefore to go to the festival at Jerusalem; but he refused to go himself just then, because the fitting and appointed time for declaring himself more publicly was not yet quite come. Having thus replied to the arguments of his relations, he remained for some time in Capernaum, where this conversation took place. His relations took their journey without him; and after they had been gone some time, our Lord was pleased to go also to Jerusalem: not however in such a way as to draw attention to his journey, but in as private a manner as possible.

There was much talk and enquiry about him, amongst the people who met together at Jerusalem for the festival; they were in doubt whether he would attend the feast, and asked where he was. Many different opinions were expressed

about him: some approved of him, and thought him a good man; others were of a different opinion, and considered him as a deceiver. All this however was said only in a sort of private whispering amongst acquaintances; every body was afraid of speaking about him openly, because the Pharisees and chief Priests were known to be his enemies, and therefore were likely to be suspicious of those who made any talk about him.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See. No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The brethren of our Lord acted with regard to Him, just as a great many people do in the present day as to the doctrines of the Gospel. These relations did not believe what Christ told them of himself, or receive as true the motives by which his conduct was guided. Accordingly they judged him by other motives than his real ones, and of course came to a wrong judgment. The arguments which they stated had a shew of reason in them; but they were quite mistaken, because they did not take the whole subject into the account. They argued only upon what they knew, or thought they knew, of Jesus; and concluded that it was inconsistent in him not to go to Jerusalem, and shew himself in public: whereas, the time for laying down his life being not yet come, it was his wisdom not to hasten that time by producing unnecessary excitement amongst the people. It is much the same now with persons who find fault with different points of religion, and argue about them in a manner that seems very correct to those who do not take in the whole of the Gospel-truth. Such

persons find a doctrine very difficult, just because they do not believe the point to which that doctrine leads. They argue only with half-knowledge, and come of course to a wrong result. When the main matter is received as true, the difficulty disappears; and the very point at which they before stumbled seems a help instead of a hindrance in their way. The same remark may be applied to Christian conduct. Persons who do not understand the motives upon which Christians act, often consider them to be very inconsistent. But when such persons afterwards come to see their motives in the true light, they acknowledge that the conduct they thought so wrong, was really according to Christian wisdom.

QUESTIONS.

Is there any point in the Scripture which I fancy to be unreasonable or erroneous?

Does this arise from its being connected with some other doctrine which I disbelieve or dislike?

Do I ever judge the conduct of christians to be inconsistent, though at the same time I refuse to examine the motives which they profess to guide them?

2. In the unbelief of the relations of Jesus, we have another instance of the truth of that proverb "a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and in his own house." The application made of the portion which stated our Lord's first preaching at Nazareth, will equally suit the present occasion. (See vol. i., page 213.)

3. Our Lord's remark to his relations, applies to what he calls "the world" in all generations. Worldly people have no objection to the manners and customs of those, who do not protest against the evil of their ways. They "cannot hate" those, who leave them alone without reproving the course

they pursue; for that is in fact to countenance them in that course: but as soon as any one is bold enough to "testify of the world," and to expose the ungodliness which characterizes its works, a spiteful anger is excited, and is shewn in as many ways as circumstances will permit. Such bold testimony is usually called *uncharitableness* by the world: but it is curious to observe what real want of charity is shewn by the world, when speaking of those witnesses against evil; whom, because of their testimony, they hate.

QUESTIONS.

Do I take proper occasions of protesting against such evil works, as are commonly followed or excused by the world?

Or, do I consider persons who protest against worldliness as being straitlaced and uncharitable?

4. In this portion our Lord sets a bright example to many warm-hearted and earnest persons, who know that "to depart and be with Christ is far better" (Phil. i. 23), and who are scarcely willing to remain in the flesh as long as God has seen fit to appoint for them. This is often the case with Christians who have been afflicted with long illness and bodily sufferings, or who are tried with great distress. Being prepared by God's grace to put off the body of pain, and to hope for the glorious body which shall be given to those who are Christ's, and look for His Coming—they sometimes feel impatient at the delay which takes place in calling them to their rest. The wisdom and forbearance of Jesus, in carefully avoiding all unnecessary or untimely excitement which might hasten his end, should be taken as an example in all such cases. It was a more earnest desire of His heart to finish the work that the Father had given him to do, that he might

see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied (Isaiah liii. 11), than any desire of the most christian heart to enter into the glory prepared for his people; and yet He forbore to take any step that might bring on this great end, until God's time was "full come." This wise conduct conveys a lesson also to those who, without looking to the approach of death, are too ready to draw upon themselves opposition and anger, by *unnecessary* offensiveness in their *manner* of resisting the conduct of worldly people. There is quite offence enough in the very best way of exposing the evil of the world, to make them "hate" those who thus act like Christ; so that we should be especially careful to follow at the same time his prudent caution, not to give unnecessary offence or excite untimely opposition.

QUESTIONS.

Is my heart willing to wait God's time for calling me to the rest that remaineth for his people?

Is there any thing in my manner of condemning the evil of worldliness likely to increase the offence which such condemnation cannot fail to produce?

Do I ever act as if I did not care, whether worldly people were made sinfully angry by my Christian reproof?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for simplicity of faith to receive the whole truth; and for humility of mind, to be kept from judging either the doctrine or the practice of Christians whilst you have an imperfect knowledge of either.

2. Pray for Christian courage to be like our Lord in standing against all ungodly customs and habits of the world; and ask for wisdom and tender compassion toward worldly people, so that you may be restrained from producing an unnecessary degree of anger by untimely forwardness in doing even what is right.

3. Pray for a spirit of patient contentment, to submit to God's delays, and to wait his full time for giving every desired blessing.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O blessed Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; open my heart to receive and feel thy truth in simplicity and godly sincerity. Make me humble and lowly, that I may esteem others better than myself; and may refrain from deciding as to the conduct of those, whose motives I have not the means of knowing. (2) Give me thy Spirit, and enable me with godly boldness to testify of the world that its works are evil; but guard me from undue haste in shewing forth the evil of worldliness to the unconverted. Give me wisdom to know how to refrain my tongue, and keep silence even from good words, while the wicked are before me; and how to choose the fit time to speak for thy glory. Give me a tender pity for the condition of those who heap up wrath in resisting thy truth; that so I may be ever watchful over myself not to excite any one to sinful anger, and may seek to win souls by gentle forbearance. (3) Grant me, O Father, such a patient submission to thy holy will, that I may be contented to receive thy mercies at whatever time thou art pleased to bestow them. Make me ready to depart and to be with Christ, and equally ready to remain and do his service in my present state; so that in patient well-doing I may wait all the days of my appointed time, till my change shall come, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED & ELEVENTH PORTION.

Jesus appears in the Temple and teaches.—*Conversation, No. 32.*

PLACE. *Jerusalem.* TIME.—*About six months before His death—Year 29.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD. for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. John's Gospel, c. vii. ver. 14 to 24.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

JOHN vii. verse

14. midst of } means here { middle, or fourth day
the feast } of the festival

15. letters learning

22. the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and
Jacob, and the twelve
heads of the Jewish tribes

23. every whit whole.....well in all his body

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

The feast of Tabernacles lasted eight days, and it was not until the festival was half over, that Jesus shewed himself amongst the people. About the fourth day however he went into the Temple, and occupied himself there in teaching, as he had formerly done. (John v. 14—47.) The Jews were astonished at his great knowledge, and the manner in which he gave his instructions; and they could

not understand how he had become able to do all this, as he had never gone through the regular studies by which men usually become learned. (Matt. xiii. 54—56.)

Our Lord told them that what he taught did not come from his own learning, as men obtain knowledge; but that it was the message of God the Father, who had sent him to convey it to the world. And in like manner the doctrine he taught cannot be received and spiritually understood by means of men's learning merely; but a sincere desire to act according to the will of God, is needful to prepare the heart; so that a person thus disposed and prepared shall be brought to a right knowledge of the doctrine, and shall feel that it comes from God, and was not spoken by Christ merely as a man. A teacher who comes forward of his own accord, to give instruction which he has obtained by study, endeavours to advance his own interest or his own honour: on the contrary, one who (instead of caring for himself) strives only to promote the glory of God, shews that he really is in truth that which he professes to be, a messenger sent from God. (Psalm l. 23.)

Jesus then brought forward an instance of another person, who delivered God's message to them not as his own doctrine; which nevertheless they did not receive for want of that same preparation—a hearty desire to do God's will. Moses had given them God's Law; which none of them fulfilled, although they pretended to acknowledge it. Then he asked them why they, who did not keep the law themselves, were planning how they might put him to death, under pretence that he had broken the law. (John viii. 40.) The

people upon this declared that he must be possessed, and out of his senses, in saying such a thing. Who wanted to have him put to death? Our Lord at once justified his question, by referring to the occasion when such had been the general desire amongst them. The very last time he had appeared at Jerusalem, when he had performed that miraculous cure upon the poor man at the pool of Bethesda, which had made a great noise amongst them; the Jews had taken advantage of its having been done on the sabbath day, to charge him with breaking the law, in order that they might get him condemned to death. (John v. 16—18; vol. ii. page 40 & 47.) Now on that very subject of the sabbath, they themselves shewed that what he had done on that occasion was no reason for their seeking to have him condemned by the law. This he proved thus: Moses had appointed circumcision (Lev. xii. 3); not that Moses was the first to appoint it, for it had been the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, who had circumcised Isaac; so that Jacob and his children, the twelve heads of the tribes, were all circumcised (Gen. xvii. 9, 10; xxi. 5.) According to this appointment, if a child happened to be born on the sabbath-day, the work of circumcising him was performed on the eighth day, although it fell upon a sabbath-day when it was commanded that no work should be done. (Exod. xx. 10.) If then in such a case they did not scruple to administer circumcision on the sabbath-day, in order to keep the rule about the time of circumcising a child; how was it that they were so bitter against him, for restoring a man to the use of all his limbs on the sabbath-day. Let them only consider this,

and not judge differently in one case from what they would do in another case of the same kind, merely because they wanted to favour one person and to condemn another ; their judgment should be according to justice, without malice or partiality. (Isaiah xi. 3, 4.)

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. We are often apt to think, that it requires human learning to be able to understand the doctrine of Christ ; and many excuse themselves for neglect of religion by saying they are "no scholars." Our Lord's words in this portion contain an answer to all such excuses and reasonings. As Christ himself did not receive the Gospel by learning, but as a simple message from his Father to men ; so likewise the Gospel which he delivered must be received, not by learning, but by simply believing his message as it is delivered. St. Paul explains this fully in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. i. 17—25.) This is always the way in which the Gospel is received by those hearts which have been inclined by the Holy Spirit, so that they really desire to do that which is pleasing to God. The poorest and the most unlearned person in the world is quite capable of receiving the greatest wonders of the doctrine of Christ, and of believing them to be true when he hears them : while, on the other hand, all the learning and advantages of the wisest or richest man in the world, will not help him to

believe that doctrine more easily and fully than the man who is no scholar. Salvation is as much within the reach of the unlearned as of the learned. The preparation for "knowing of the doctrine" mentioned by our Lord suits well with this statement. A desire or inclination to do God's will may be in the heart of the most ignorant person; while the heart of the most learned person may be without such a desire. It is this inclination, produced by the influence of the Holy Ghost, which prepares the heart to receive the saving truths of the Gospel, and not any learning which a man may get by his own study. How mercifully has God ordered his covenant of salvation in Christ, that it may extend over all mankind, reaching to the very lowest, and suited to the wants of the very highest;—raising the most ignorant and simple, by divine knowledge, above the wisdom of the world; and bringing down the proud thoughts of those who imagine themselves to be wise. (Matt. xi. 25, 26. See also the applications in vol. i., pages 148 & 166.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I imagine that ignorance of the great doctrines of religion, will serve as an excuse for my not being truly religious?

Do I take advantage of every opportunity to know the Gospel, in order to believe what I am taught?

Is it my sincere desire to do God's will, however difficult it may be to make my own will agree with His?

2. Persons who are religious in a merely formal manner, are oftentimes very inconsistent in the way they apply their principles of judgment to themselves, and to others with

whom they wish to find fault. This was charged upon the Jews by our Lord. They could lay aside their strict views of the outward observance of the sabbath, when it suited them; but they would not make the same allowance for him, when he was engaged in a work, as much the appointment of God as the exact performance of circumcision—the work of mercy. (Hosea vi. 6. Matt. xii. 7. See vol. ii., page 57.) Jesus bid them not judge “with respect of persons” (James ii. 1—9); (*according to the appearance* means according to the different appearance of the case, in applying it to persons towards whom we have different feelings.) This is a very great danger in the present day; and the same judging according to the appearance which arises from private feelings, may still be charged by our Lord (who knows all hearts) upon many professing Christians. Persons who are in general very exact in their own outward observances of religion, often satisfy themselves that they have good reason for certain habits or customs, which at first sight might perhaps seem contrary to their general rule. The law respecting the Sabbath affords as frequent instances of the kind now, as it did in the days of the Jews. Many persons, who are seen at Church once if not twice on the Lord’s day, yet do many works afterward which might easily be avoided: sometimes settling their worldly accounts, or taking unnecessary journies for pleasure; or amusing themselves on that day with various games: almost as if they were trying to do all they could to drive away whatever serious thoughts they might have got in Church; like some

sick people, who “divert their minds” (as they call it) with light reading and amusement, in order to prevent their thinking about dying. Such persons have their own notions about the Sabbath, which very conveniently allow of these things. But when they see some other people, whose professed spirituality they greatly dislike, using the Sabbath in an actively charitable way (which, though really for the glory of God, does not suit with *their* feelings); they judge such conduct as being improper and unchristian. There are many other duties, besides those of the Sabbath, where this application may be made; to each of which we should apply our Lord’s directions not to judge with respect of persons, but to make a fair impartial judgement in all cases, whoever may be the parties concerning whom our judgement is to be formed.

QUESTIONS.

In what cases do I make allowances for my own conduct, which seem to require some explanation before they can be reconciled with God’s word?

Do I in all such cases make the same kind of allowances for every body else, both for those whom I do not like, as well as for those whom I do?

Are there any points upon which I may be likely (from feelings or circumstances) to form a partial judgement against any one? Do I watchfully guard against the danger of thus judging?


VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Ask for a simple faith in the doctrines of the Gospel, and for a sincere desire to do God’s will in all things.

2. Pray to have grace to be really impartial in all your opinions, and especially in those which lead you to a severe judgement of other people.

Could this be the person, whom the chief priests had been trying to convict of such an offence against the laws, as would procure a sentence of death? Yet he was teaching his doctrines publicly in the Temple, without any hindrance from those in authority. Had the chief priests found out that they had been wrong, and that he was really the person he described himself, the Messiah? This however (they said) could not be the case; for they knew (as they thought) the family connections of Jesus (Matt. xiii. 55, 56); but they were taught by the scribes to believe that, when the real Christ appeared upon earth, his parentage and birth-place would not be known.

When these remarks were made by some of the people in the Temple, Jesus turned the subject of His teaching to suit their thoughts; and speaking loud enough to be heard by them all, He asked, did they indeed know who he was? and who were his parents? and where he was born? (The words in verse 28, "Ye both know me and know whence I am," ought rather to be put "do ye both know me and know whence I am?") He then referred to what he had just before been teaching them concerning his doctrine (John vii. 16, 18. See page 10.) and told them that he was not come of his own accord without being sent, but was sent by the TRUE ONE of whom they knew nothing—who was really His father, though they knew it not, but supposed Joseph to be His father—ONE of whom however Jesus had full knowledge, because he came from Him, and was commissioned by Him. When he thus declared their ignor-



ance of God, some who heard it would have taken him up; but though they desired to do so, yet nobody ventured to come forward and seize him. They were restrained, without knowing why, by the power of God; because the time which He had determined beforehand for "reconciling the world unto Himself" by the sufferings of Christ was not yet fully come. (Rom. v. 6. Gal. iv. 4.)

While some were ready to lay hold on Jesus, there were on the other hand many people who were disposed to receive Him, and who for the time believed on Him. These argued, that the miracles done by Jesus were quite as many and as wonderful as the Christ might be expected to do whenever he should appear, and therefore, that He ought to be received as such. It was soon reported to the Pharisees that such things were whispered about concerning Him, and they lost no time in endeavouring to put an end to such notions. Accordingly having consulted with the chief priests, they sent proper officers with a warrant to apprehend Him, and bring Him before the Sanhedrim, or chief court of Justice. (See vol. i. page 258.) Upon this, Jesus said, that he was to remain upon earth but a short time longer, and then he would go away to the Father who had sent Him; (thus leading the people to understand that in the mean time all attempts to take Him would be of no avail.) And when He should have left this earth and returned to Heaven, then they would seek anxiously for that Messiah whom they now despised, but in vain; now He was with them, but then He would be where they could not follow Him.

The people about Jesus who heard Him say this, could not understand what He meant. They asked each other where He intended to go, that they would not be able to find him. Was it to the Jews who were settled abroad in all the various countries of the world? (Acts ii. 5.) And did He mean to give His instructions to the people of other nations besides Jews? It appeared quite strange and hard to be understood—his telling them that they would endeavour to find Christ but in vain, and would not be able to follow him where he was going.

During the feast of Tabernacles which had been going on at this time (see page 1), a ceremony was performed, which was intended to bring to remembrance the manner in which God had supplied the Israelites with water during their journeyings in the Wilderness (Exod. xvii. 1—6. 1 Cor. x. 1—4.); and also to signify their expectation of the blessing of rain at the approaching seed-time. This ceremony was fetching water from the spring of Siloam, (which ran forth from a rock under the Temple, Neh. iii. 15. John ix. 7, 11.), and carrying it round the altar, repeating at the same time those words (from Isa. xii. 3) "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation;" then the water was poured out upon the sacrifice that lay upon the altar. (see vol i. page 139.) On the seventh or last day of the festival, this ceremony was performed with greater solemnity than on the other days: the priests and the Levites walked round the altar seven times with the water, singing and carrying branches of trees. On this last day of the feast, when the people

were all assembled to see and join in this religious service, Jesus took the opportunity of publicly addressing them. Standing amongst the multitude he called out that whosoever were thirsty should come to Him to quench their thirst. He then shewed them what He meant by saying, that whoever believed on Him should become as it were a spring, from which rivers of the water of life should go forth ; as might be gathered from the Scriptures. (Prov. x. 11 ; xviii. 4. Isaiah xii. 3, xlv. 3 ; lv. 1 ; lviii. 11. See also John iv. 10—14. Rev. xxi. 6 ; xxii. 17.) St. John tells us, that Jesus made use of this comparison in order to describe the effect and power of that Holy Spirit, which believers in Him were to receive—not yet indeed, at the time He was then speaking, for the Holy Ghost had not yet been sent from Heaven, because the great work of atonement for sin was not yet completed, and Jesus had not yet risen from the grave, and gone up into Heaven in glory. This He afterwards did ; and then the Holy Ghost came down upon the disciples, to remain with the church for ever. (Acts ii. 1—4, 33. John xiv. 16, 17.)

In consequence of this public declaration which Jesus made, calling the people to come to him for spiritual life, many said that he must be the Prophet who was at that time so generally expected (see vol. i. page 138. John i. 21.) Other people said he must be the Messiah himself. But some objected to this opinion, because Jesus was said to be of Nazareth in Galilee ; and they asked, whether the Messiah was expected to be a Galilean ? Was it not on the contrary stated in

Scripture, that the Messiah was to be of the family of king David? and to come from the town of David, which was Bethlehem? (Micah v. 2. Matt. ii. 4—6. Psalm cxxxii. 11. Acts ii. 29, 30. See vol i. page 70.) Thus there arose a great difference of opinion about him amongst the Jews: some would willingly have seized him and given him up to the officers, but were hindered without knowing how, so that they did not do as they wished and intended, for nobody ventured to touch him.

The officers who had received the warrant from the Sanhedrim to take up Jesus, went back without having executed their orders. The chief priests and Pharisees at once enquired, why they had not brought their prisoner. All that the officers had to say was that there never was a man who could speak as they had heard Jesus speak. The Pharisees asked them if they too had been foolish enough to be deceived by this man; why should they? there were none of the upper classes of society—the rulers or the Pharisees, amongst his disciples; it was only the common people who were inclined to follow Jesus, persons unacquainted with the books of the law and the prophets, poor ignorant wretches under a curse. This appears to have been spoken to the officers at a meeting of the Sanhedrim; of which Nicodemus was a member. St. John tells us that it was the same Nicodemus who had visited Jesus secretly by night at the beginning of his public ministry, and says that he was then present at the council. Nicodemus enquired, whether it was according to the Jewish law to condemn any man, without giv-

ing him an opportunity of answering for himself, and without receiving evidence concerning the offences laid to his charge. Upon this the other members of the council taunted him, and asked whether he too belonged to the party of Jesus the Galilean. They bid him look well into the Scriptures, and he would find that there was no part which stated that any prophet was to be raised up in the country of Galilee. After this discussion however the meeting of the council broke up, and the members went to their several homes. Our Lord was left unmolested, and went out of Jerusalem to the mount of Olives.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See. No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. In this portion we have some striking instances of the way in which notions about Scripture, ignorantly taken up without proper enquiry, hinder people from receiving religious truth although they are placed within reach of it. The Jews had been brought up to think, that when the Messiah appeared no one was to know from whence he came; and this notion was a hindrance to their receiving the truth which Jesus taught, merely because they fancied that they knew all about his family. Those persons also, who were better informed as to the prophecies concerning the Messiah, were prevented from profiting by our Lord's doctrine; because they did not take the pains to make such enquiries about Him as the importance

of the subject required, and as it would have been reasonable to expect they would have done. They knew it had been foretold that the Divine Ruler, whom they expected, was to come out of Bethlehem (Micah v. 2) the town of David, of whose family he was to be born : but though the proofs which Jesus gave of his authority were enough to make them examine more particularly, than merely taking the common report concerning him ; yet they were ready to reject all the evidence of his miracles and his discourses because he was commonly supposed to be a native not of Bethlehem but of Nazareth. Even the most learned of his enemies, who referred Nicodemus to the Scriptures, (from which they drew a right conclusion that no new prophet was to be expected from Galilee,) fell into the same error for want of due enquiry into the claims of Jesus. Many persons in the present day deprive themselves of the benefit they might derive, from some plain statement of important truth that they happen to hear in a Sermon or conversation, for exactly the same reason as these Jews. They have picked up some unscriptural notions of religion from those with whom they live ; and these notions have taken such hold of their minds, that an account of religious truth really founded on the Scripture seems to them quite contrary to reason, and therefore they resist or reject it. Or they may have been taught some correct notions of Divine truth, but without feeling their power : and then perhaps if they happen to hear of the spiritual use to which those doctrines ought to be applied, and the spiritual fruit they ought to produce, they neither ac-

knowledge the one, nor endeavour to bring forth the other. All this arises only from want of proper enquiry and examination of the subject; which, under God's blessing, would lead them to discover that, however contrary to their first impressions, every doctrine of truth testifies of Jesus, and is meant to strengthen our faith in Him.

QUESTIONS.

Are my religious opinions grounded upon the authority of Scripture, so that I may never be hindered from receiving instruction because of false notions ?

Do I take the pains to examine the spiritual instruction I receive, by the standard of God's word, and not by my own notions merely ?

2. God shews His mercy towards his people, in restraining the evil desires of those who would injure them ; so that their enemies are prevented from saying or doing many things against them, which would certainly be said or done but for this secret restraint. The Jews went about to kill Jesus ; but they could do him no harm, because the time was not yet come when God saw fit to permit the evil to be done, in order that a greater good might result from it. Even when the officers came to take him into custody, they seemed to be deprived of all power, and they returned to the judges without their prisoner : this was because God restrained their minds, so that they could not do as they had intended. God deals with respect to the people of Christ, as he dealt in this instance with respect to Christ himself—no weapon formed against them prospers

(Isaiah liv. 15, 17). By the restraining mercy of God wicked men are hindered from distressing and hurting those who put their trust in Him; providential circumstances interfere with plans, or hearts are softened without knowing why: so that almost every real christian may be able to recollect some occasions, in which they have been defended or preserved from intended evil, in a way that shews how God was guarding them as he guarded Christ. This makes it the more clear that when painful things *are* allowed to happen to God's people, it is because the designs of those who intend evil will in the end produce a greater good, however distressing may be the present trial: and thus we may see the truth of that word. that "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. viii. 28.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I acknowledge the hand of God, in preventing many distressing things which would naturally have happened to me, if the desires and intentions of evil persons had not been restrained?

Does this make me submit to those distressing things which have been permitted to happen, with a more cheerful assurance that they will certainly work together for my good?

3. Jesus told those persons who were seeking to do Him harm, that after a little while, when He was with the Father, in Heaven, they should seek him in vain, because where he was going, they could not get to hurt Him. This is not only true of Himself in His present state of glory, but it is also true of Him in a spiritual sense in the midst of

His true church upon earth. Many powerful kings have tried by every means of force and cruelty to put out the light of christianity—to find out (so to speak) the Spirit of Christ, in order to drive Him away from the world. But as Christ Himself in Heaven is above the power of His enemies upon earth, so also the Spirit of Christ is secretly placed in the hearts of men, beyond the power of those who oppose religion. No opposition, however cunning or violent, has ever been able to destroy the principle of spiritual life, where it has really been planted by Christ in the heart. Some persons, who have deceived themselves with a mistaken notion of religion, may have been turned away from their hopeful beginnings; but in such cases, it has been just because the opposers could not find Christ in their hearts, that they found the means of making such christians deny Christ.

QUESTION.

Have I reasonable hope that Christ is really hid in my heart, so that He cannot be driven from it by the oppositions of any persons who may desire to keep me from really spiritual religion?

How have I withstood such hindrances and oppositions as have been thrown in the way of my spiritual acknowledgement of Christ?

4. The fifth application of the twenty-third portion (vol. i. page 199.) may be used here, with reference to our Lord's invitation to those that thirst, and his promise of the "living water." But the manner in which he speaks of that water here suggests other thoughts, besides those arising from what he said upon the other occasion. (John iv. 10—14.) In the invitation here given,

Jesus declared, not only that a person thirsting and coming to him might receive that which is meant by the "living water"—the Holy Ghost (as it is afterwards explained)—but also that from every one who thus receives of Christ's Spirit shall flow "rivers" of the same "living water," of which they themselves have drank : that is to say persons, who have been partakers of the blessing of spiritual life themselves, shall also become the means of conveying a similar blessing to others. Such persons not only "let their light so shine before men that they may see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16) but they also plainly declare to others the excellence of that which they have themselves known—they speak what they have believed (2 Cor. iv. 13); and what they do and say is often blessed to those around them. Thus they become pipes as it were of conveying out of themselves the "living water"—the source of spiritual life; and thus "rivers" of this water may be said to flow from out of the soul of every one, who by the power of the Holy Ghost has been led to believe on Christ.

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever speak upon religious subjects with those whom I fear to be without true spiritual life ?

Do I sincerely desire to bring such persons to the waters of life ? How is this desire shewn ?

Have I so conducted myself in this respect as to have a reasonable hope, that the Holy Spirit not only is in me as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," but also that it flows from me as a "river" of living water ? "

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray to be blessed with a right understanding of God's word, and a spirit of diligence in examining whether your instruction is according to that Word.

2. Pray for grace to perceive and acknowledge the hand of God, in protecting you by His restraining mercy from evil men; and pray that your confidence in this mercy may make you more ready to submit with cheerfulness to every painful dispensation which shall be permitted to befall you.

3. Pray that Christ may be so securely hidden in your heart that no opposition or trial of your faith may ever find the way to put him out of it.

4. Pray that the Holy Spirit may subdue in you all the feelings of restraint which might hinder you from speaking to others on religious subjects; and that you may so manifest the power of Christ in your life and conversation as to be made a means of conveying to those around you the blessing of spiritual life.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

[1] O merciful God, the Father of lights and the source of all true wisdom, give me a spirit of understanding and of a sound mind, to discern the truth in thy holy word; and enable me diligently to compare with that truth all that I am taught, so that I may follow my instructors as they follow Christ. [2] How great is thy goodness and mercy, in preserving thy people from the many evils which constantly surround them! I desire thankfully to acknowledge thy providential protection so many times afforded to myself, when the evils which the craft and subtilty of the devil or man hath devised against me have been brought to nought. Lord increase my faith and sure trust in thy mercy; and grant that whenever it shall please Thee to permit any trial to befall me, I may cheerfully submit, as knowing that thou wilt order all things for my good. [3] Come, Holy Spirit of Christ, and take possession of my heart; that being the secret power of my life, no persecution or distress

may ever be able to shake thy dominion there, or to induce me to deny Christ by word or work. [4] So influence all my desires, that the fear of man may be taken from me, and every feeling subdued which hinders me from declaring the excellence of thy truth. Enable me to speak without shame before the world concerning the things of the kingdom of Christ ; and so to manifest the power of that kingdom in my life and conversation, that those around me may be drawn to attend, and that by thy mercy their souls may be watered and refreshed by thy waters of comfort ; and give me a good hope that thy Spirit within me is as a river of living water to refresh others, and to glorify the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH PORTION.

A woman taken in adultery brought to Jesus.—*Conversation, No. 34.*

PLACE. *The Temple in Jerusalem.* TIME.—*About six months before His death—Year 29.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURES.

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. viii. ver. 2 to 11.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

JOHN viii. verse

10, &c. condemned *means here* passed sentence of the law upon

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Jesus having passed the night upon the Mount of Olives, returned early the next morning to Jerusalem. He went as usual into the Temple, where a number of people were already assembled, who came round him ; and he sat down and gave them instruction as he was accustomed to do.

While he was thus occupied, the Scribes and Pharisees interrupted him, in order to bring before him a woman, who had been detected in adultery. From the accounts given by Jewish writers, there is too much reason to fear that the


feast of Tabernacles (the great day of which was just over) was usually kept by many of the Jews much in the same way that some of the festivals of our Church are kept now-a-days. (Whitsuntide, for instance, is intended to be a season of religious rejoicing: but crowds of people are in the habit of making it a season of excess, giving way to drunkenness and other sinful things after they have attended divine Service with their clubs.) The large collection of men and women, from all parts of the country, who attended at this feast, and who crowded to the ceremony, especially on the last day, made it very likely that such abuses should take place at that time; more particularly as many of them used to remain in the outer court of the temple all night, or sleep in the little chambers with which it was surrounded (1 Kings vi. 5, 6. 1 Chron. ix. 26, 27. Neh. xiii. 9), where much opportunity for impropriety might occur. It is probable that under some such circumstances as these, at that early hour in the morning, the discovery of this woman's guilt had been made; and the Scribes and Pharisees took advantage of the occasion, in the hope of ensnaring our Lord; so that they might have to charge him with speaking either against the law of Moses, or against the laws of the Romans who governed the land. They placed the woman before Jesus in the middle of the crowd, and told him the crime in which she had been detected. Then they put him in mind, that the law of God given by Moses was very clear upon the point;—that it required such a woman to be put to death, and that her execution was to be by stoning.

(Lev. xx. 10. Deut. xxii. 22—24.) This was the law ; but they desired to know how Jesus would dispose of the case they brought before him.

While these Scribes and Pharisees were thus speaking to our Lord, he appeared to pay no attention to what they said ; but bent forward from the seat on which he was sitting, and appeared to be making marks with his finger on the ground, as though he would let them see that he was not listening to them. They would not however be put off by his not attending to them ; but very likely took it as a sign, that at last they had got him into a difficulty from which he did not know how to escape. So they went on repeating their question, until at length Jesus raised himself and spoke to them. He bid that person amongst them who was himself free from the same sin, to begin to fulfil the law of Moses, by being the first to throw a stone at her (Deut. xvii. 7) : and having said this he bent down again, and employed himself as he had done before in making marks with his finger on the floor. As soon as the Scribes and Pharisees who had brought the woman heard what he said, each one began to feel conscious that, at some time or other in his life, he had himself been guilty of the same sin as they were charging her with ; and one after another quietly got away, feeling that with such a direction he dared not be the person to throw a stone : so that in a little while they had all gone away from first to last, and our Lord was left without any one of the accusers ; and the woman remained where they had placed her, in the middle of the crowd of people who had been listening to Christ's teaching.

It may seem strange perhaps to some people, that there was not one of these Scribes and Pharisees sufficiently moral to have been free from the crime of adultery. We learn however from Jewish writers, that about this time the general immorality was so great, and this particular crime so common, that the great council of the nation had given orders that the priests should no longer try a suspected woman's conduct by "the offering of jealousy" appointed in the law of Moses (Num. v. 11—31); because the great number of such cases made it difficult, if not impossible. It is not therefore surprising, that not one of these Scribes and Pharisees should be without this burden upon their conscience.

Our Lord then raised himself from his stooping position; and seeing none of the persons with the woman, who had brought the charge against her, he asked her where they all were; was there not one who had passed the sentence of the law against her, by beginning to throw the stones? (The witnesses who caught any person in the act of committing a crime punishable with death, were commanded to be the first to execute the law; or to pass the sentence as it were upon the criminal, by throwing the stones to kill him (Deut. xvii. 7): and this is the meaning of our Lord's question to the woman, whether any man had "condemned" her.) She answered that none of her accusers had done so. Then Jesus told her, that he would not be the person to pass sentence by throwing a stone at her; and he bid her go home, and taking warning from her escape now, to turn from her evil ways and sin no more.



V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See. No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

There are three points of view in which this portion may be considered, in order to make the proper application. We should regard, first, the conduct of Jesus; secondly, the conduct of the accusing Scribes and Pharisees; and thirdly, the case of the woman.

1. In regard to the conduct of Jesus we may observe that, when a true story was told him of a very shocking crime, (instead of attending at once to the charge, and joining in the expression of judgment against the sinner) he seemed to pay no attention to the case; until he had made it the occasion of awakening the consciences of those persons who were acting upon double motives, and were giving way to very sinful feelings themselves, in the manner in which they exposed the sin of another. In this respect our Lord sets us an example, by which most of us may have frequent occasions to profit. There is a secret pleasure to many a natural heart in talking of the evil conduct of others; which perhaps arises from a sort of pride, in feeling that no suspicion of similar conduct attaches to ourselves. But whether it arise from this or from any other motive, it continually happens that, when any one is detected in some gross sin, almost every body is ready to expose the sinner and talk of the sin, and tell it from neighbour to neighbour. And if the case happens to cast blame upon some one who makes a profession of being religious, the readiness to expose such a one

seems to be greater : how many are there then who eagerly make the same sort of comparison which these accusers did to Jesus—"By the rules of society, this offender would be shunned and despised ; but what say the religious people ? very likely they will excuse such conduct in one of their own set." Without however excusing the sin in the least degree, but on the contrary shewing how necessary it was to be pure from such an offence, our Lord turned the attention of the accusers to themselves ; and led them to consider their own state of heart in God's sight, before they threw a stone at a fellow-sinner. And in the same way a true Christian will feel pained, when he perceives that common eagerness to report evil of others, however true. Instead of joining in the ready condemnation with which many people seem almost pleased to tell the story of a neighbour's sin, he will rather say nothing about it ; until either by a silence, which may be made full of meaning as our Lord's was, or by some mild rebuke like his, the gossiping talebearers may be made to look into their own hearts, and to feel that it rather becomes them to follow that Christian charity, or love, which is described as "covering" a neighbour's sins, even though they be many. (James v. 20. 1 Pet. iv. 8. Prov. x. 12 ; xvii. 9.)

QUESTIONS.

How have I behaved, when the known sins of others have been talked of and exposed in my company ?

Have I been led by the conversation to join the ready abuse for which some unhappy sin has given occasion ? Or have I by silence or rebuke endeavoured to follow the example of Jesus in such a case ?

2. The example of our Lord's conduct applies to those, who hear sinful actions spoken of in an unchristian manner : but the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees may be applied as a warning against giving way to any thing like such evil speaking ourselves. None but persons utterly devoid of religion can possibly express pleasure at the open sins of another ; but through the "infection of nature" that remains, even "in them that are regenerate" (as it is expressed in the ninth Article of the Church), even really Christian persons are not free from an inclination to speak of the discovered guilt of their neighbours, without duly considering what is the Christian course in such cases. This is shewn by an eagerness to pronounce a sharp judgment even upon a plain case of sin ; and by the habit of gossiping scandal, in which some people indulge who do not think how much of sinfulness there is in such talk. The scriptural rule of conduct, for those who really are "spiritual," towards one who has been "overtaken in a fault," is to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness;" and the reason the Apostle gives for this rule is, the consideration of our own weakness and danger in case we should be tempted to commit the same fault. (Gal. vi. 1 ; see also 1 Cor. x. 12.)

But in fact many persons are enabled to speak freely of the open sins of others, only because their own are hidden. How few would be qualified to pass judgement, even upon the greatest sinners, if they were put to the same test which Christ applied to these scribes and Pharisees, according to his own rule in the Sermon on the mount. Matt. v. 21—30 ; vi. 1—6. see

thirty-fifth portion, vol. i. page 287.) If all the consequences were to take place, which ought naturally to be the result of secret sins which are known to God only, how often would the lip of scandal be silenced by the voice of conscience. One of the marks of true charity is that it "rejoices not in iniquity," but will rather grieve for it, and consequently will have no pleasure in speaking of it, except when obliged by necessary duty. Such charity "rejoices in the truth;" and wherever such rejoicing exists, there never can be at the same time any thing agreeable in hearing or speaking of the iniquity of others. (1 Cor. xiii. 6.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever find myself pleased and eager to speak of the sins which others have committed? Have I helped to spread any scandalous report by repeating it?

Am I sure that, in the sight of God, I am quite clear from the very sins I have thus charged upon others?

If my neighbours knew all that I have done, could I venture to speak of what they have done that is wrong?

3. A third application of this portion may be taken from the manner in which the woman herself was treated by our Lord. He made no excuse for her; while at the same time he shewed her much compassion. He led her to see the strictness of the law and the evil of her sin, not by a severe rebuke to herself, but indirectly; by requiring in those who would pass sentence on her, that they should first be free from that sin; thus pointing out that even the stain of it is offensive to God. (Jude 23.) Whilst on the one hand he did not soften or excuse the sinfulness of her conduct, on the other hand he did not deliver her up to the consequences of her

offence : but having called forth a proof that the corruptions of the heart were alike in all her accusers, He (who being "without sin" might have cast the stone) on the contrary let her go free, leaving the remembrance of his great kindness to enforce his command, that she should turn from her evil ways, "and sin no more." This case, thus treated by our Lord, is an apt illustration of his dealings with all of us as sinners. He shews beyond a doubt in his Gospel, and by His Spirit within us, the sinfulness of sin—its great evil—the impossibility of God's tolerating or excusing it. But he shews this, not by bringing its consequences upon the sinner, but by taking its consequences upon himself, rather than allowing them to fall upon us. He teaches us that man's judgment is not fitting to pronounce sentence against us (1 Cor. iv. 3): and though He himself is peculiarly fit to judge us, as being a fellow man and also without sin (John v. 22, 27), yet so far from casting us off, and leading us to expect deserved condemnation, He tells his people that he will not pass sentence against them;—that there is no condemnation to them that are joined to him, and come to him (Rom. viii. 1. John iii. 17);—He bids them go forth to the discharge of the several duties to which they are called; and, under the influence of a grateful sense of his forgiving love, to live a new life, avoiding sin for the future. (Ps. cxxx. 4. Rom. vi. 22.)

Christ's conduct to the woman gives us also an example how to treat those, with whom we may have any thing to do, who have been plainly guilty of some sin. We are not, as He was, in the condition to have any right to pass sentence upon

such persons; but we may be placed in circumstances, in which we can imitate his merciful compassion. It is not only our duty to abstain from unchristian condemnation and exposure of sin, but we may often be able to assist an unhappy sinner, to go forth into a new course of life "and sin no more." Every opportunity of this kind will be joyfully taken by one who heartily desires to follow Christ.

QUESTIONS.

Do I feel such a thankful sense of Christ's love in taking my condemnation upon himself and procuring for me a free forgiveness, that it leads me continually to resist sin?

Do I take every opportunity I can of helping others, who are involved in sin, to alter their course and sin no more?

4. With respect to the crime of which this woman had been guilty, see Matt. v. 27—32. vol. i., pages 266 and 268.

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for self-possession, to be able to consider the duty of christian charity, so as not to be carried away by the conversation of others, and consent to evil speaking against a fellow sinner: and ask for grace to rebuke such wants of charity whenever you find it.

2. Pray for that spirit of love which rejoices not in iniquity; and for that conviction of sin in yourself, which leads to a tender consideration for others who have fallen into sin.

3. Pray that the remembrance of Christ's love may be so powerful within you, as to make you earnestly strive to overcome every sin to which you may be tempted; and to fill you with such a compassion for sinners, that you may always endeavour to help those who have fallen into sin to "recover themselves."

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O gracious and merciful God, who didst give thine only son Jesus Christ to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification; I beseech thee

to shed thy love abroad in my heart, that I may always be possessed with a kindly charity towards all men. Enable me to be watchful and upon my guard, that I may not carelessly follow the ways of those who speak evil against their fellow sinners ; but give me grace to repress such want of charity, whenever it is manifested in my presence.

(2) Teach me, O God, that the true love which is the work of thy Spirit rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth ; and give me that spirit of love more abundantly. May that same spirit work in me, convincing me of my own sinfulness, and so humbling me with a sense of my unworthiness in thy sight, that I may feel tenderly towards those whose sins have been laid open before man, even as mine are, O Lord, before Thee.

(3) Give me a lively and thankful sense of the love of Christ towards me, in setting me free from that condemnation which I deserve, that it may continually direct me to sin no more : and fill my heart with such compassion for my fellow-sinners, that I may use every means to help them in escaping from the bondage of their sins and rising again to newness of life. I ask all in the name of Jesus Christ our Mediator and Redeemer.
AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

Jesus resumes his teaching in the Temple.—*Conversation No. 35.*

• PLACE. *Jerusalem.* TIME—*About six months before His death.—Year 29.*

MAY GOD. for the sake of **JESUS CHRIST**, give me the **HOLY SPIRIT**, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. **AMEN.**

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. viii. ver. 12 to 20.

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

13, &c. record means here witness

15. the flesh the feelings of man's
natural heart

20. the treasury the place where money
is kept

After the interruption occasioned by the case of the adulterous woman, Jesus resumed the instruction which he had been giving the people. "I am (said he) the light of the world." Perhaps when he made this remark, the sun was at that moment rising; for the expression made use of to mark the time when he came into the temple (John viii. 2) shews that it must have

been before dawn ; and therefore it would be about sunrise when he sent the woman away. Many of our Lord's most impressive remarks were connected with circumstances happening at the time when they were made. He said that whoever followed him should not go on in a way, that shewed they could not see the things of the world to come ; but that they should have the light of a proper understanding concerning spiritual life, to make them know how to conduct themselves. (John i. 4, 5 ; ix. 5 ; xii. 46. Psalm xxxvi. 9 ; see also Eph. v. 8. 1 Thess. v. 4—9.)

There were in the temple some Pharisees among his hearers, besides those who had slipped away when he had sifted their consciences respecting the woman's sin. These Pharisees took offence at his calling himself "the light of the world ;" and told him that, as he was only boasting about himself, it was not worth while to pay attention to what he said, and that it was false. To this our Lord replied that, though he did say all this about himself, yet what he said ought to be attended to, being true ; for he knew well where he came from, and to what place he was going : that is to say, He was acquainted with the object of his coming from Heaven to earth, of which they knew nothing ; they could not tell where he came from, or to what place he was going. They formed their opinion and judgment of him according to their passions and prejudices. He did not wish to express a judgment about any of them : yet if he should think proper to judge concerning the character of each of them, his judgment would be a correct

one, and ought to be attended to ; for though he appeared but a man, he was not by himself in the work he was about, but he and God the Father from whom he came were One (John x. 30 ; xiv. 9) ; and therefore his judgment would be the judgment of God. He put them in mind of that rule in the law of Moses, that the testimony of two persons was enough to prove the truth of every important matter. (Num. xxxv. 30. Deut. xvii. 6 ; xix. 15 ; see vol. ii, page 49.) Now Jesus was one witness for the truth of what he said about himself, and God the Father was another witness of his truth : alluding to the voice from heaven, which had spoken concerning him at his Baptism. (Matt. iii. 17.) The Pharisees upon this asked him, whom he meant by his father, and where that father was to be found ? To which Jesus replied, that they were ignorant both who he was, and who his Father was ; for if they had any right knowledge of him, they would also have a right knowledge of his Father.

At the time our Lord said all this, he was sitting in that part of the Temple, where the chest was placed in which the people used to put their gifts of money for the service of the temple. (Mark xii. 41—44. Luke xxi. 1, 2. 2 Kings xii. 9. 2 Chron. xxiv. 8—11.) Though he carried on his instruction thus boldly and openly, yet nobody attempted to prevent him by taking him up ; for the set time for his laying down his life was not yet arrived. (John vii. 30, page 19.)

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The comparison which Jesus made, in calling himself the light of the world, is meant to convey to us very important instruction. What would be the condition of those, upon whom the sun shed no light,—who remained in such darkness as once happened for three days in Egypt? (Exod. x. 21—23.) And our Lord's comparison suggests such consequences as these to the soul, when Christ does not shine in the heart. (Job v. 13, 14. Isaiah lix. 9, 10.) But when He becomes the guide of our lives, and we heartily desire to follow in the way where he leads us through this life to the next, every thing is seen in its proper place, and right proportions: the circumstances which happen to us, the duties to which we are called, the worldly things which tempt us astray, and the heavenly things to which we look forward, all are considered in a way quite different from the former view. : It may be said of one truly following Christ, that for him “the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” (1 John ii. 8.) He is no longer uncertain how to conduct himself; the word of Christ is brought home to his mind by the Spirit of Christ, so that the right way is not doubtful. The hope of eternal life makes him careful to look at everything in such a point of view, as will shew its results with respect to that life in the first place; and thus the “light of life” shines upon all things, and he is

able to avoid whatever is contrary to that life, and to follow whatever is suitable to it. This comparison is frequently used in the Scriptures; indeed they may be said throughout to apply to each of us that call, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14. Acts xxvi. 18. Rom. xiii. 12. 1 Peter ii. 9. 1 John i. 5—7; ii. 9—11.)

QUESTIONS.

Does my desire to follow Christ produce any effect in my view of the value of this world and of the next? Can it be said to be different from the view taken by those who do not pretend to follow Christ?

Do the things of eternal life seem to be clearly before me; so as to give me reason to hope, that I am walking according to "the light of life" afforded by Christ?

2. When Jesus declared himself to be "the light of the world," the Pharisees considered this "record of himself" as vain boasting. Jesus had also declared that his disciples are "the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14; see vol. i, pages 250 & 252); and whenever we profess to be christians, we may be said to claim this title. If the claim is made merely by a profession in words, little or no notice will be taken of it: but if we not only profess to be "the light of the world," but also "let our light so shine before men," as thereby to call upon them to give glory to Christ, as the only source of all light in us, we shall often find that such a profession of spiritual religion (through which we properly bear the character of "the light of the world") will be treated as vain boasting by those who judge us according to the maxims of the world.

This must not hinder us from maintaining very plainly our profession of spiritual life; lest we should be found guilty of being ashamed of Christ. (Mark viii. 38.) We must however be careful that, besides our own testimony in distinctly claiming the character of a christian, it may be clear that God has added another testimony to the truth of our profession, by the effect which His Spirit produces in our temper and conduct.

QUESTIONS.

Am I ready to acknowledge my profession as one of Christ's spiritual disciples, whether it may be thought boasting or not?

Do I continually strive to live so plainly under the power of the Holy Spirit that His influence upon my conduct may confirm my outward profession of religion?

3. This is the second occasion upon which our Lord himself distinctly laid claim to divinity, by speaking of himself as One with God the Father, and therefore equal to him (John v. 17—30; see vol. ii, page 46.) We shall find that he repeated this claim afterwards; and it may perhaps only be necessary here to take notice of this important repetition, and to read again the first application of the forty-eighth portion, vol. ii, page 52.

4. The statement made in verse 20 will recall to mind the second application of the 112th portion, page 25.

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may have spiritual light to see how to follow the way of truth in Christ?

2. Pray that you may never be ashamed of the profession of spiritual religion, and ask for grace to be able to live according to that profession?

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Merciful Lord I beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon me ; that being enlightened by the doctrine of thy Gospel, I may so walk in the light of thy truth, that I may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (2) Grant that I may never be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil. O Almighty God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; grant that being admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, I may turn from those things which are contrary to my profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTEENTH PORTION.

Jesus carries on his teaching in the Temple.—*Conversation, No. 36.*

PLACE. *The Temple in Jerusalem.* TIME.—*About six months before His death—Year 29.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. viii. ver. 21 to 30.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

JOHN viii. verse

26. to judge of *means here* to charge against

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

It seems that our Lord made some pause in the conversation which he was carrying on in the Temple. The manner in which the last portion was closed, and the use of the word "again" at the beginning of this, lead to the same conclusion ; so that we may call this the opening of another conversation with the same people in the Temple at Jerusalem. Jesus now repeated to the Jews around him what he had said a few days before, when he first came into the Temple during the

Feast of Tabernacles. (John vii. 33, 34. See page 19.) He said that he was about to leave them, and that when he was gone away they would endeavour to find him; but that they should die impenitent and unbelieving: he was going to a place where they would not be able to follow him. When he had said this before, those who heard him fancied he might mean that he would go to instruct the other nations of the world, the Gentiles. Now they had a different thought; they enquired amongst themselves whether he meant that he would kill himself, when he declared that they could not follow him to the place where he was going. They had evidently no notion of the spiritual application of his words; but understood what he said only in a bodily and worldly sense. Upon this Jesus told them that their thoughts and feelings related to the earth below; but that his thoughts and feelings related to heaven above: *they* belonged to the world which knows nothing but this present life; which was not the case with Him. (John iii. 12, 31; xvii. 14, 16. 1 Cor. xv. 47.) It was because of this great and important difference, that He had told them that they would die continuing in their sins: the great sin of rejecting Christ, and refusing to believe that he is the divine Saviour that he declared himself to be, keeps people in all those sins from which they might be saved by receiving Christ, and hardens their hearts; so that they go out of this life in their sinful state, at enmity with God. (John iii. 18, 19, 36. Mark xvi. 16. Acts iv. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 17.)

Upon this the Jews asked him who he made himself out to be, by talking in that way; to

which Jesus answered, that he had already told them some time before, who and what he was. He most likely referred to what he said at the time he drove the dealers and money-changers out of the Temple, when he first entered upon his public ministry (John ii. 16; see vol. i, page 163); and perhaps also to the plain manner in which he declared that he was equal with God the Father, upon the occasion of the charge of Sabbath-breaking made against him, when he had cured the sick man at the pool of Bethesda. (John v. 17—30; see vol. ii, page 47.) They had paid no attention to him then; and now he had many things to charge them with, which they would equally disregard, nevertheless He who had sent him to them was worthy of belief, and Jesus did but declare those truths which he had received instructions from that Person to convey to them. (John vii. 16.)

His hearers had no notion that he meant God the Father: but he told them that, after they had completed the great sacrifice by lifting up the Son of Man on the Cross, then it would be seen that he really was all that he professed to be;—that He was one with the Father, and never acted of himself alone;—that according as he received of the Father, so he declared the doctrines of the Gospel;—that God from whom he came was always with him, and had never abandoned him, because all the things he did were done according to the pleasure of the Father. When Jesus made such strong statements, and spake with such authority, many of those who heard him thought that what he said must be true.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See. No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. It is a dreadful thought, that any who have the opportunity of knowing Christ's salvation should die in their sins ; for to go out of this life and stand before God, while the heart is at enmity with him, with the love of sin there, is to be cast into perdition for ever. The Jews to whom Jesus was speaking had neglected many opportunities of taking advantage of his mercy ; and he told them that the time would come, when it would be too late and they would seek him in vain, for that they should die in their sins. He afterwards stated the same doctrine more at large (Luke xix. 41—44) : and from this we may understand the great danger of letting slip the present occasion of turning to Christ, and receiving the benefit of his atonement ; especially when at any time the conscience is awakened to a sense of sin. Every such occasion resisted or neglected, tends to confirm the power of sin, and to harden the heart ; so that in time the sinner becomes unable to see the sinfulness of his sin, so as to seek the only means of salvation from it. And thus he lives on and he dies in his sins ; the greatest of which is the unbelief which makes him resist the love of the Saviour, and therefore keeps him under the guilt of all his other sins. The case of Judas affords a striking and terrible example of this hardening of heart under lost opportunities. (See Prov. i. 22—33.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever resist the voice of my conscience, and put off attending to religious instruction ?

In looking back to a former state of my mind, can I remember that it used to be upon the whole more spiritual and lively in religion than it is at present ? If so and I were soon to die, is it not likely that I should die in my sins ?

2. Our Lord points out in this portion the real reason why people will not receive the truth contained in the Gospel. It is because they are "of this world;" their feelings and desires and expectations are all belonging to the things upon earth, and engaged in the present life. As long as this is the case, spiritual and heavenly things have no influence, because they do not suit with the views of the worldly heart; and the great doctrines of salvation appear impossible and are rejected, because they are not understood by the earthly mind. The power of the gospel must first effect that great alteration in the heart, by which worldly-mindedness of feeling begins to be overcome, and spiritual-mindedness to take its place: then a person will begin to understand the Bible, and to perceive the suitableness and truth of the gospel doctrine. (John vii. 17.) And therefore, in order to have any well-grounded hope of Christ's salvation, we must discover in ourselves some proof that we are not "from beneath," but from above; not "of this world," but of Christ.

QUESTIONS.

What ground have I for supposing that I am not "of this world," in the sense in which our Lord uses the expression ?

3. In this portion our Lord makes a THIRD distinct declaration of his Divinity and oneness

with God the Father. See page 47 ; and vol ii, page 46.) These repeated statements upon this most important point will be more fully referred to upon a future occasion.

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may profit by every opportunity of knowing Christ, that so you may daily advance in spiritual life, and endure unto the end and be saved.

2. Pray for spiritual-mindedness, that the worldly desires of your heart may be put away so as effectually to receive the Gospel.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O merciful God, who desirest not the death of a sinner but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live, give me grace that I may never resist the love by which Thou wouldest draw me to the salvation of thy dear Son. Renew thy mercy daily to me, that I may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and keep me steadfast in the same even unto my life's end, that if I be soon called away from this world, I may die in Christ, and not in my sins. (2) Give me the life of the Spirit so effectually working in me, that by the power of His cross the world may be crucified to me, and I unto the world ; so that no earthly feelings may hinder my receiving the truth of the gospel in simple faith, through the daily supply of thy Heavenly grace. I ask all for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH PORTION.

Jesus continues his teaching in the Temple.—*Conversation No. 36, continued.*

PLACE. *Jerusalem.* TIME—*About six months before His death.—Year 29.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD. for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. viii. ver. 31 to 59.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

JOHN viii. verse

33. in bondage *means here* slaves

lusts of things desired

46. convinceth convicts

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

It was stated at the end of the last portion, that our Lord's repeated declarations of His Messiahship had the effect of making many of his hearers believe that he was the person he represented himself to be. He told such persons that, in order to be truly his disciples, they must be settled and remain steadily in the doctrine which he taught them : by so doing they should gradually become acquainted with the truth of God ; which should have such a power over them that it should give them freedom. The Jews understood him to speak of freedom from that bodily slavery, in

which those who are called in the New Testament "servants" were held; and they interrupted him to say that they were born in the family of Abraham, and had never been made slaves:—what did he mean then by saying that they should become free? (Lev. xxv. 40—55. Exod. xxi. 2.)

Our Lord upon this explained what kind of freedom he alluded to. He solemnly declared that a person who gives way to sin becomes the bond-slave of sin. (Rom. vi. 12—23.) Then he pointed out the different situation in a family which is held by a slave, and by a child born to the master of the family. A slave has no continual interest in the family, which a son has; the slave may be sold and sent away, but the son is a part of the family: so that if the master's son gives a slave his liberty, that slave becomes free. This Jesus stated so as to apply it to himself; declaring that, if the Son of God should make the Jews to whom he spoke free from the slavery of sin, they should (as he had already said) truly have freedom. He was well aware that they were born in the family of Abraham; but they were nevertheless planning how they might destroy him: and the reason why they wanted him out of the way was, that his doctrine did not suit them, and therefore they would not take it in. He only taught however that which he had known and seen with his Father; they on the contrary were doing what *they* had learned from *their* father.

At this mention of their father, they interrupted our Lord again to claim Abraham as their father, meaning in a bodily sense: but Jesus again led them to the spiritual sense in which he spoke. If they were the children of Abraham, in

the sense in which he meant, they would act upon the principles which governed Abraham's conduct, and do as he did; instead of which, they were endeavouring to take away the life of a man whose only offence was bringing before them doctrines which he knew to be true, because he received them from God himself. Abraham had never acted in this manner: He did not mean therefore to speak in a bodily sense of Abraham, when he had said that they were doing what they had learned from their father: but he repeated that they were following *their* father, and doing his works.

The Jews with whom Jesus was conversing seem upon this to have got some confused notion that he spoke in a spiritual sense; yet they did not understand him clearly. They first maintained their right to be considered as the true offspring of Abraham, protesting that they were no bastards; and then they followed his spiritual application of their birth, declaring that in that point of view they had but one and the same Father, even God. Our Lord denied this, by shewing that if they were children of God they would certainly love Jesus; for he had come from God, not having come into this world of his own accord only, but especially commissioned by the Father. (Heb. v. 4, 5.) How was it that they did not know what he meant? But he answered his own question, by repeating the reason he had already given for their desiring to kill him; — just because they could not bear the doctrine he preached to them. Then he put the statement he had before made into the plainest language, so that it could not possibly be misun-

derstood. He told them that they were children of the devil ; and whatever Satan as their father desired them to do, that they willingly did. The devil had excited men to kill each other from the very first ; he had turned away from the truth, because he is essentially without truth : whenever he puts falsehood into the mind he acts suitably to his character, for he is a liar and the source of lying. As for Jesus, on the contrary he spoke the truth ; and for that very reason they would not believe him. No one could prove that he had committed the sin of falsehood. As that was the case, and he spoke truth, why did they not credit what he said ? A child of God would pay attention to God's word (John vi. 37) : the Jews did not therefore regard Christ's words, (which are God's words), because God was not their Father.

What Jesus had now said appeared to the Jews to justify their former opinion of him, that he was possessed by an evil spirit ; and that he was an enemy to the Jewish nation, and hated them as the Samaritans did (John iv. 9 ; see vol. i, page 186) : (though in calling him a Samaritan they meant also to use a term of contempt and abuse ; much in the same way as some English people would intend to speak contemptuously of a person, by calling him a Jew.) Our Lord was not provoked by this language, but calmly answered, that he was not under the influence of an evil spirit, but was giving honour to his Father, while they on the contrary were doing dishonour to him, who was the Son of God the Father. He would not undertake to defend his own claim to be honoured ; there was one above who would justify that claim, and would bring into

judgment those who refused to honour him. On the other hand he solemnly assured them, that a person who really honoured him by receiving his doctrine and continuing in it, should never be brought into the condemnation of death, or experience the bitterness of its power in what is called the second death. (John xi. 25, 26. Rom. viii. 1, 2. 1 Cor. xv. 54—57. Rev. xx. 14.) To express this, he said that such a person “shall never see death.” This expression only confirmed the Jews in their perverse error about him—now they were quite sure that he was under the power of a devil. Abraham had seen death (in the sense in which they took our Lord’s words), and likewise the prophets had all died: these were holy people, who had kept the commandments of God; and yet this man Jesus pretended, that any person who kept his saying should never taste of death. This was exalting himself above Abraham the father of the nation, who in spite of his faith and obedience to God’s word had died; so had the prophets of God also.—Who then did he pretend to be?

Jesus answered this question by repeating what he had said before again and again. (John vii. 18; viii. 50.) He did not depend upon his own testimony, as to who he was, and the honour due to him; if he were to do so, the claim would be of no value. He depended upon the testimony of his Father; even that Jehovah, whom they professed to call their God, but with whom in fact they were entirely unacquainted. Jesus however had a perfect knowledge of him; and if he were to say that he had not a perfect knowledge of Him, he would have spoken falsely, as his oppos-

ers did : he maintained therefore that he knew God, and kept his commands. As for Abraham himself, their father according to the flesh, he had felt whilst he was alive a longing desire to see the coming of the Christ, which was in fact the time when Jesus came into the world. (Gen. xxii. 18. Luke i. 54, 55.) Abraham, after his death, had seen that time and rejoiced in the fulfilment of his faithful expectations. (Matt. xxii. 31, 32. Luke xvi. 22.) As his hearers did not think of Abraham's being then alive in heaven, they supposed that Jesus meant that he had been alive before Abraham had left this world, and they taunted him for saying this.—What ! he, who could not possibly have been alive even so much as fifty years, had he seen Abraham, who had been dead more than eighteen hundred and fifty years ? In answer to this taunt, our Lord in the most solemn manner declared his eternal divinity as God. He said, “verily, verily, before Abraham was, I AM.” This did not mean that before Abraham was born, Jesus was born ; but that before the existence of Abraham, Jesus, as the Son of God, existed in eternity. He did not say *I was*, but he took to himself the name by which JEHOVAH declared himself to Moses—I AM. (Exod. iii. 14.)

When Jesus made this plain declaration of his eternal divinity, the Jews around him considered that he had spoken blasphemy ; such as was commanded by the law of God to be punished with death by stoning (Lev. xxiv. 16.) Accordingly they proceeded to fulfil the law, and were taking up stones to throw at him, but Jesus concealed himself from them, probably by an exertion of his divine power, in the same way as he had done

upon two other occasions (Luke iv. 30. John v. 13. See vol. i. page 213 and vol. ii. page 40.) ; and passing through the midst of the crowd went out of the Temple.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. It is a very common mistake to suppose, that we are to receive the doctrines of the Gospel and believe them to be true, only so far as our understandings can comprehend them. Whereas what we can see and know upon first hearing of Christ is quite enough to make it reasonable that we should trust God for the certainty and correctness of much that lies far beyond our first view. Our continuance in a steady belief of the Gospel, as a whole scheme of salvation for man, (although at first our minds may be greatly tried with unbelieving temptations), is the proof of being his disciples which our Lord requires. Such an exercise of simple stedfast faith will gradually open the mind, clearly to perceive and understand doctrines, which at first we considered puzzling or doubtful : and besides this it produces a gradual increase of strength, in resisting the power of sin ; so that it ceases to have dominion over us, and we are able firmly to refuse obedience to feelings and habits, which before led us away from God. On the other hand, if we receive the Gospel only so far as our reason allows it, we may profess a belief upon being convinced of certain points ; but our faith will not take root and continue : we shall give up point after point, not being able to discern the truth ; and

the power of worldly and sinful habits and feelings will be sure to keep us in their bondage.

QUESTIONS.

Have I been willing to give God credit for the truth of his word ? and am I continuing to do so in spite of temptations to unbelief ?

Do I gain strength in resisting the power of sinful habits and feelings ; so that Christ's word gives me freedom from sin ?

2. The language in which Christ here describes the power of sin is very strong, and ought to excite in us a lively sense of the danger in which sin places us. To be under the influence of any habit, or feeling, which forces us to do what is displeasing to God is to be indeed a slave. Our pride makes us, like the Jews, abhor the thought of being slaves to any man : but multitudes who are angry at being thought under the controul or influence of another person, very obediently submit to the hard service imposed upon them by Satan ; whom our Lord calls the father of those, who are the servants or slaves of sin. It is very striking that Jesus describes those, who do the works of the devil, as his children ; and it ought to give a powerful idea of the hatefulness of sin, and the dreadful consequences of being a child of the devil. His very name produces a feeling of fear and of disgust wherever it is used in a serious manner. Falsehood, hatred, or malice, are mentioned here as works by doing which a human being becomes related to the devil, as children are to a father ; being like him in spiritual nature, and obedient to him in act. We must carry the thought of this spiritual relationship a little further, and remember that his children must expect to receive their inheritance from him ; and what has he to give but enmity to God

as long as we are in this life, and the judgment of God in the life to come, by which he and his children will be cast for ever out of the presence of God. (See vol. i, page 124.)

QUESTIONS.

Am I under the power of any sin? Is there anything that I feel to be wrong, and yet do because I cannot help it, from circumstances, or from feelings, or from habit?

Do I realize the fact, that to do the devil's work is to belong to the devil, and to be a sharer of his inheritance?

3. What our Lord said about Abraham—that he saw Christ's day and was glad, is one of the few passages of Scripture which speak of the feelings of those who have departed this life. We may gather from hence that the departed spirits of God's people are both acquainted with events which are passing in this life, and also interested in them. Every word of information that is given on this subject should lead us to realize the unseen things of the other world, and to consider the importance of making our calling and election sure; that when taken from this world, we may join the spirits of the just made perfect. We shall not be able to enjoy then what gives them happiness, unless we can find pleasure from the same sources now, while we are in this life. Abraham longed to see the day of Christ's first coming upon earth, and when he saw it he rejoiced; how much greater a longing must there be amongst departed saints for the glorious day of Christ's Second Coming upon earth (Rev. vi. 9—11); and how much greater the rejoicing amongst them, when it shall have come. (Rev. vii. 9—17; xix. 5—9.) Such must be the object of our desire now, and

the hope of our rejoicing; in order that we may have fellowship with those saints who are gone before us, and that we may be prepared to enter into the same joy. (Phil. iii. 20, 21. 1 Thess. iv. 14—18. 2 Thess. i. 10. 2 Peter iii. 10—13. Rev. xxii. 20.

QUESTIONS.

Do I endeavour to realize the happiness of those who are departed in Christ?

Do I look forward with feelings of expectation and pleasure to the day of our Lord's coming again on earth?

4. In this conversation the Jews shewed a very obstinate perverseness in misunderstanding our Lord's meaning, and much insolence of manner towards him. There are few things more difficult to bear, than the insolence of those who, being ignorant themselves, will not submit to the teaching of truth: similar conduct on the part of the fathers of these Jews made that meek man Moses speak unadvisedly with his lips (Psa. cvi. 32, 33): but He who was conversing with the insolent Jews in the Temple was greater than Moses; and in this, as in all other things, he shewed himself to be without sin, giving a perfect specimen of that charity that "is not easily provoked." (1 Cor. xiii. 5.) In this point he is especially pointed out as our example, that we should follow his steps. (1 Peter ii. 21—23.)

QUESTIONS.

How do I behave towards those, who receive my endeavours to do them good in a proud and insolent manner?

Can I say that my spirit is not easily provoked? and if so, is it because I bear provocation with christian love?

5. We find our Lord repeating, with increased distinctness and power, his claim to be considered as the Son of God, One with the

Father. This is the fourth time that he has made this statement in the plainest language; and with respect to this last occasion there cannot possibly be any doubt as to what he meant: for the persons to whom he spoke understood him to make such a claim, and would have proceeded to punish him for blasphemy in so doing, had he not avoided them by an exercise of his divine power. And Jesus did not tell these persons that they were mistaken, in supposing that he meant what they thought he did: either therefore he allowed men to commit a sin, under a false idea which he had thereby encouraged; or he must be in very deed what he led them to suppose—the Son of God, entitled to the name of the eternal I AM. As most people who oppose the Saviour's Godhead acknowledge that he was a good man and incapable of falsehood, they place themselves in this difficulty; from which there is no escape, except by acknowledging the truth, that He is indeed "very God of very God."

QUESTIONS.

Is my mind firm and stedfast in the belief that Jesus is the Son of God equal with the Father?

Does this belief lead me to honour the Son as I honour the Father?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for grace to receive the word of God in simple faith, and to continue his disciple through all temptations, specially shewing that sin has no dominion over you.

2. Pray for strength to resist the devil, and for grace to be kept from serving him by doing any of his works.

3. Pray to be able to enjoy the same happiness as that of the spirits who are now waiting in Hades; and that the Lord may speedily fulfil the joyful expectation of his Church.

4. Pray for a patient and forbearing spirit, so as to imitate Christ when under provocation.

5. Pray for simplicity of faith, to continue in a constant honouring of Christ as God.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Merciful Lord, the author and finisher of our faith; enable me, I beseech Thee, to receive the truth of thy word even as thou art pleased to reveal it. Graft in my heart the love of Thy name, increase in me true religion, nourish me with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep me in the same, that sin may have no dominion over me.

(2) Make me strong in thy strength to resist the temptations of Satan, that I may not yield my members as instruments of any unrighteousness at his bidding. (3) Draw my affections to spiritual things, that with all the company of heaven I may love to magnify Thy glorious name, for all thy great love in giving thy Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour, and for the glory that shall be revealed at His Coming. May it please thee of thy great goodness shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom; that, together with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy Holy Name, I may partake of Thy everlasting glory through Jesus Christ. (4) Teach me how to follow the steps of his blessed example, and when I am reviled not to revile again; but to take patiently every provocation which may be permitted to try me. (b) And while I strive to imitate him as man, may I ever remain in the firm and simple faith which receives Him as my Lord and my God. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTEENTH PORTION.

Jesus gives sight to a man born blind.—*Miracle, No. 31.*

PLACE. *Jerusalem.* TIME—*About six months before His death.*—Year 29.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. ix. ver. 1 to 41.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

[There is no word used in this portion, the meaning of which seems difficult to understand.]

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Though in leaving the Temple our Lord had "hid himself," or made himself unseen, in order to escape from the violence of the Jews who wanted to stone him to death ; yet when he came outside the building he appeared again openly to his disciples. It was the custom for poor people, who had bodily infirmities or other afflictions, to remain round the gates of the Temple, in order to excite the pity of those who came to worship and to beg money of them. (Acts iii: 2.) A beggar of this kind, who had been born blind, happened to be near the Temple as Jesus was coming from it. Our Lord looked upon him ; and the disciples enquired the reason why such an affliction had befallen the man—was it sent as a judgment upon

any sinful conduct in his father and mother ? or because of any sin of his own ? Whatever may have been the notions of the disciples, which led to make this enquiry, our Lord gave them a reason very different from either of those which they had suggested. Neither his own sins nor the sins of his parents were the cause of this man's being born blind ; but it was in order that God's healing power might be shewn forth upon the man. Then Jesus declared HE must be working those works (even the works of God who had sent him upon earth) while he was still living upon earth : a period which he called " day," as compared with the period after death which he called " night." As men do their appointed work during the day-time, and rest from it at night, so was it appointed for him to do miraculous works before he suffered death and passed into that future state, where men have no power to do any thing with reference to their work in this world. (Job vii. 9, 10. Psalm vi. 5 ; lxxxviii. 10—12. Eccles. ix. 10. Isaiah xxxviii. 18.) Whilst he remained amongst men, he was to do those miracles which shew God's light in the world.

Having thus answered their question, he immediately proceeded to shew how the works of God were to be made manifest in this blind man. He dropped some spittle from his mouth and mixed it with the earth on which it fell, so as to thicken it into a sort of clay. This he spread upon the eyes of the blind man, and then told him to go to the spring which flowed from a rock under the Temple (see page 20), and to wash himself in the water there. The name of this spring was Siloam, the meaning of which word is " sent." (By saying

this St. John probably meant to shew, that the man's cure was to be gained not from the power of the water in itself, but from his being *sent* by Christ to wash there.) The blind man went away and washed, as he had been directed ; and then for the first time in his life the power of sight was given to him : so that although in the course of nature it would require a long time to enable a person born blind to use his eyes properly, even after they were capable of being used, yet this man was at once as able to see every thing about him, as other people are who have always had their sight. (See vol. iii., page 181.)

When the neighbours, who were accustomed to the appearance of the blind beggar, saw him on his return from Siloam, they could not believe that it was the same person whom they had so often noticed begging at the gate of the Temple. While some of them said that it must be the same, and others thought that it was very like him, he declared that he was indeed the very selfsame person. Upon which they questioned him, how such a wonderful thing had happened as that he should be able to see ; and he simply told the case as it had happened. A man of the name of Jesus had moistened the earth into a kind of clay and spread it over his eyes ; and had then desired him to go and wash in the waters of Siloam : he had done so, and in consequence was able to see. The people asked directly where Jesus was to be found, but the man could not tell them.

The circumstances of this miracle were so extraordinary, that it was thought necessary to inform the Pharisees directly of the matter ; and

the man who had been born blind was taken before them. It happened to be a Sabbath-day, when our Lord had given him sight by rubbing the moistened earth upon his eyes. The Pharisees examined him afresh as to the way in which he had received his sight. He repeated in plain terms what he had before stated ;—that Jesus had put the moistened earth upon his eyes—that he had washed in the water of Siloam—and had found himself possessed of sight. Upon this some of the Pharisees gave their opinion that Jesus could not be a man of God, because he done what they called work on the sabbath ; but there were others who suggested that it was impossible for a sinful man to do such wonderful works. So there was a difference of opinion amongst them ; which led them to question the man himself as to his own opinion of the person who had given him sight. He answered without doubt or hesitation, that he considered him to be a Prophet.

While this examination was going on, it occurred to the minds of some that the whole case was a cheat ;—that the man had not really been born blind and suddenly become able to see, but that he was an impostor who had shammed blindness in order to excite pity. His father and mother were sent for and questioned upon this point :—was this really their son, whom they stated to have been born blind ? and how it was that he was blind no longer ? His parents could only give evidence of what they knew. They testified to the facts that the man was their son, and that he had been born blind ; further they could say nothing, either as to the manner in which he had been made to see, or of the person who had given him

sight; their son was grown up, and old enough to answer for himself. The father and mother acted thus cautiously, because they were afraid of getting themselves into trouble: for it was well known that the chief people amongst the Jews had decided that any person, who should openly declare his belief that Jesus was the expected Messiah, should be deprived of all the privileges of worship and communion with the people of God. This was called putting a person out of the synagogue; or (as we should call it) excommunicating him. It was for fear of this that the parents bid the Pharisees examine their son themselves, as he was of proper age to answer for himself.

After this examination of the parents, the man who had been blind was called up again for a second or what may be called a cross-examination. What the Pharisees said to him seems at first sight to mean that they bid him give glory for the miracle to God, and not to the man whom they knew (they said) to be a sinner: but probably the true meaning of their expression was, to bid him confess that he was an impostor and had told a falsehood; since they knew that such a man as Jesus, whom they considered a sinner, could never have done such a wonderful work. In saying this they made use of the very same expression that Joshua did, when he was urging Achan to make confession of his hidden wickedness. (Joshua vii. 12.) The man however very boldly kept to the truth. Whether Jesus was or was not a sinner, he would not pretend to decide; but as to the fact, he was well assured that he himself had been blind, and had now the full use of his eyes.

Upon this the Pharisees urged the man again to state what had been done to him, and how Jesus had given him sight. The man referred them to what he had already said ;—he had told them all the particulars, but they paid no attention to what he had said—why did they want it repeated ; was he to suppose that they were enquiring after the truth of the matter, in order to attach themselves to Jesus as his disciples ? When they heard this they began to use abusive language and taunted him with being Jesus's disciple ; while they on the contrary were the disciples of Moses. They had good authority for believing that Moses delivered what God himself had spoken ; but nobody knew where this Jesus came from, or what was his authority. The man grew bold and courageous as they grew abusive, and told them it was a strange thing that they should not know who gave Jesus his authority, when he had performed such a miracle. Surely one who is in sin will not be able to prevail with God in obtaining what he asks for ; but one who worships and obeys God will receive from Him what he prays for. Now such a miracle, as giving sight to a man who had been born blind, was a thing unheard of, and never known to have happened before from the beginning of the world : yet this miracle had been performed by Jesus ; and if he were not a man of God, surely he could have done no such thing. The Pharisees were enraged at this poor beggar daring to talk to them in this way : that one who was altogether despised, as born with a special mark of sin upon him (as they thought),—that such a one should presume to argue with them, and instruct them—

this was not to be borne. So they proceeded at once, as the great council was then sitting in the Temple, to pass a sentence against him, by which he was deprived of the religious privileges of a Jew; they excommunicated him, that is, they cast him out of their church.

Our Lord, being informed that this sentence had passed, found the man out, and asked him whether he believed on the Son of God. Not knowing who was meant, he asked Jesus, who is the Son of God, in order that by knowing him he might be able to believe on Him. Our Lord then said plainly "you have already seen him, it is the very person now talking with you." This (we should remember) was the first time that the man had seen Jesus; for he was blind when they had met before. Upon hearing our Lord's declaration, he immediately professed his belief, and threw himself at his feet in an act of worship.

Jesus took this occasion of publicly declaring that he had come into the world, in order that God's judgment might be established;—that the ignorant and simple, who knew nothing of divine truth, might be brought to the saving knowledge of that truth; and that the learned and wise in their own conceits, who thought they knew a great deal, might be shut up in their real ignorance and darkness. (Matt. xi. 25, 26.) This he expressed under the comparison of blind men being made to see, and men with the use of their eyes being made blind. While the first part of the comparison was evidently applied to the man who had been born blind, the latter part pointed at the Pharisees; and some of them asked him whether he meant to call them blind.

Our Lord answered that if they really were blind—if they really had no knowledge concerning him, such as ought to make them see the truth—they would not be to blame in their conduct toward him : but they professed to be enlightened—they declared they had knowledge ; therefore their offence was great and continued upon them, according to that judgment of God which he came into the world to establish.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. There is a natural feeling, that when great afflictions occur to a person it must be a mark of God's displeasure. This however is by no means always the case ; for although there would have been no affliction in the world if man had never sinned, yet it is not true that God generally sends particular afflictions to be the punishment of particular sins. This doctrine was distinctly stated by our Lord, when the Jews brought him word that some Galileans had been killed by Pilate. (Luke xiii. 1—5.) More than this however may be learnt from the present portion ; for our Lord here tells us that a particular misfortune had been allowed to come upon a man, on purpose that "the works of God" might be shewn in him. And so it often happens, that some of the most pious of God's people are placed in circumstances of the greatest affliction ; in order that they may be made instruments of shewing forth the power of faith to overcome afflictions and glorify God.

QUESTIONS.

When I have been under affliction, have I been discouraged by the thought that my trials were a mark of God's anger for my sins ?

Have I earnestly and prayerfully endeavoured to shew the power of my trust in Christ, and so to glorify God in my troubles?

2. This miracle of our Lord may serve to shew us the way in which he frequently works to open people's minds to the spiritual light of the Gospel. This beggar, having been born blind, had not the least notion of the power of sight, until Christ applied the means which it pleased him to adopt, without their being sought for on the part of the blind man: and so likewise it often happens that persons, who having been brought up in worldly habits, and altogether unacquainted with religion, have no notion of spiritual truth and no desire after it, are yet converted in the most unexpected manner, through some means which seems to be accidentally applied, but which God is pleased to bless. In such cases the progress of the mind is commonly very much like that which occurred upon this occasion:—the new convert, without any clear understanding of the doctrine of the Gospel, is nevertheless fully convinced that a great change has passed upon him; while at the same time he shews a teachable readiness to receive every instruction concerning Jesus: just as this man had no distinct knowledge of our Lord, though, he was fully sensible of the benefit he had received, and willing to believe all he was told about him. When such conversions occur within our own observation, we are often apt to doubt the reality of the work, because it is both sudden and without distinct knowledge: but we should recollect, that wherever new and spiritual motives are professed, and an evident change of life occurs, it is safest to believe it to

be one of "the works of God," until it can be proved to be false. And whatever may be the mode which Christ may have been pleased to adopt in any of our cases, it never should be forgotten that each of us has been born without sight as regards spiritual things; and that every true christian will be able to say with this man "whereas I was blind now I see."

QUESTIONS:

Have I been slow to acknowledge the reality of conversion, because it is stated to have taken place suddenly? Or am I disposed to receive with readiness the testimony of a hopeful change in any one?

Can I truly apply the language of this blind man to my own spiritual concerns, and say "whereas I was blind now I see?"

3. Upon many other occasions we have seen our Lord perform his miracles, by merely speaking the word; but in giving sight to this blind man he was pleased to make use of some means, though in themselves very unequal to the great result produced. And so in bringing God's people to see the light of the Gospel, means are frequently employed, which (according to the judgment of man) would appear very unlikely to produce so great an effect. A plain sermon from perhaps a despised preacher, or an unexpected word of reproof; any thing in short may be made use of to touch the heart, as the clay was by our Lord to anoint the eyes. But whatever means may stand in the place of this clay, every one who is enabled to see spiritual light must go to those waters to which he is sent by the Saviour (even the fountain of his own Holy Spirit); in order that the means may be effectual, and that he may be cleansed from that love of sin, which keeps him blind to the true state of his soul and of the world. Whatever may be

the instrument used, the glory of Christ must be acknowledged in making it powerful for so great a work as turning any soul from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

QUESTION.

Do I sincerely acknowledge the direct influence of the Holy Spirit of Christ, in employing all those means which I have found useful in my own christian course?

4. The conduct of the Pharisees towards this man, in consequence of his open and honest acknowledgements concerning Christ, gives us but too true a picture of the way in which a straightforward profession of spiritual religion is treated by the natural heart. They did every thing they could to induce him to withhold the glory of the miracle from the person who had performed it; and when they found their endeavours of no avail, they cut him off from communion and intercourse with them. And so the worldly-minded continually strive by every means in their power to prevent one, who has been lately brought under the influence of true religion, from making a public profession of the great difference between his present views and those of the world, with whom he walked when in darkness. They try to hinder the spiritual progress of such a one, and to prevent others from receiving his testimony, until all is found to be in vain; and then they cast him out of their company. Such opposition however is very useful, in proving the sincerity of those who first begin to perceive the light of divine truth: and as in the case of this man whom the Pharisees had cast out, Jesus sought for him and found him, and instructed him more perfectly; so also the same Jesus takes care to

give such spiritual assistance to those who are thus tried, as leads them on to more perfect knowledge of the truth, and comforts them with the conviction that they have been found by the Son of God, in whom they have learned to believe.

QUESTIONS.

If I have ever been opposed and distressed by worldly friends on account of my religious views, how have I acted under such opposition? Have I concealed my opinions and thereby denied Christ?

Has such a trial been attended with increased grace and knowledge of the truth?

Do worldly people admit me freely into their company, or is there some check in my worldly intercourse as if I was no longer one of the world?

Do I ever avoid people, because of their character for more strict religion than I profess myself?

5. Even Christ declared that his appointed work must be done in the appointed season; for that a time would come when no more opportunity would be given for doing it. The object for which God sent us into the world must be fulfilled "while it is day, before the night cometh when no man can work." And yet how many there are, who continually delay to fulfil the great object of life—to make their calling and election sure. Every day that passes, without our making some progress in spiritual life, is not only lost, as far as the great purpose of our living at all is concerned; but it also renders that purpose more difficult, and less likely to be accomplished. No one can say how soon that night may come, which will for ever close their opportunity for labour; and this thought should lead us to that wise conclusion—"whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." (Eccles. ix. 10.)

QUESTIONS.

Am I diligently engaged in making my calling and election sure?

Do I think myself too young or too young a thing to think seriously about eternity?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for a spirit of confidence in Christ, to enable you to shew the power of your faith under every affliction which may befall you.

2. Pray for a large spirit of charity with respect to the motives of every change of conduct in others which seems to be religious; and that you may always possess clear evidence that the light of God's truth has come with power to your own mind.

3. Pray that you may always have grace to see the hand of Christ through all the means, however trifling, by which you receive spiritual benefit.

4. Pray to be supported by the Spirit of Christ under every opposition which may be made to your religion, and ask to be preserved from giving way to the natural heart which might lead you to oppose the religion of others.

5. Pray for grace to employ your time diligently for the glory of God and the eternal interests of your soul.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O merciful God, who hast no pleasure in afflicting thy people, and who desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; give me thy grace, that under every privation and trouble and distress which in thy Providence thou mayest please to appoint for me, I may manifest such a spirit of confidence in the love of Christ as may glorify him, the author and finisher of my faith. (2) Shed thy love abroad in my heart so largely, that I may be willing to see the evidence of thy love in others; and that I may not be faithless, but ready to believe that thou hast opened the eyes of those who profess to see, and walk as children of light, however sudden or

unusual may be the means by which the work has been produced : and do thou grant, that I may at all times not only have the witness within myself, that thou hast turned me from darkness to light, but that my conduct may plainly shew that whereas I was blind now I see how to walk in thy ways of pleasantness, and thy paths of peace. (3) I acknowledge thy merciful power in blessing all the means which have been employed to bring me to the light of thy truth, and to keep me in that light. Give me grace to perceive the excellence of the power of Christ, even in the least of those means by which I am strengthened in spiritual life. (4) Graciously hear me, that those evils which the craft and subtilty of the devil or man worketh against me be brought to nought, and by the providence of thy goodness may be dispersed ; so that, being supported by thy Spirit, I may be strengthened in grace and advanced in knowledge under every opposition that is permitted against me for religion's sake. O gracious God, preserve me from the grievous sin of hindering and resisting thy work in any of thy people. (5) Quicken me to a lively sense of the value of the present time, that I may work while it is called to-day, lest I should lose the opportunity which thou affordedest me of making my calling and election sure ; and so dispose my heart to delight in the work which thou appointest for me, that whatsoever my hand findeth to do, I may do it with my might. Grant all these things for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH PORTION

The Parable of the Good Shepherd.—*Parable, No. 9.*

PLACE. *Jerusalem.* TIME—*About six months before His death.*—Year 29.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST; give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. x. ver. 1 to 21.

III. THE MEANINGS;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

JOHN x. verse

3. the porter *means here* the person who has the care of the door
12, &c. an hireling a person who serves for wages

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

When our Lord had made the answer, stated at the end of the last portion, to those Pharisees who had taken offence because he said they were blind, he proceeded to speak to them a parable, which he began by those solemn words—"Verily, verily, I say unto you." This parable of the Good Shepherd is one which requires some particular information concerning the customs of the country in which our Lord lived, in order that it may be clearly understood. In some respects the ways of shepherds with their sheep are different in the eastern countries from what they are in England. The sheep there were exposed to more danger

than they are here, because it was no uncommon thing for wild beasts to attack them, particularly wolves ; and the land was not divided and fenced, as it usually is in England. When we hear of the shepherds, to whom the angels brought the news of our Lord's birth, being employed in keeping watch over their flock at night (Luke ii. 8), we are not to suppose that it was only in order to guard them from sheep-stealers, but also to protect them from wolves and other beasts of prey that were likely to attack them. This state of things made it necessary that the places, where sheep were penned at night, should not only be secured so as to prevent them from getting out, but that there should be a protection against such enemies as might attempt to get in ; and therefore a fold was commonly a sort of large yard, with high walls, and a gate properly fastened.

It is usual in England for shepherds to *drive* their flocks from one place to another ; but in the east, the common way is for the sheep to follow the shepherd, who walks before them, either calling them with his voice, or piping to them on a little sort of fife. (Psalm lxxvii. 20 ; lxxx. 1.) The sheep are so accustomed to these sounds, that they shew a wonderful cleverness in knowing the voice or piping of their own shepherd, and distinguishing it from the same kind of noise made by any other person. And this attention to their master is only the consequence of a very particular care on his part over them : a shepherd in the east is so well acquainted with every sheep in his flock, that it is a common thing for him to give them different names ; so that upon calling any one

by its name, that sheep would come to him, while none of the others would regard the call. Something of this kind often happens amongst shepherds in some parts of England, though it is not carried to the same degree. In the east also the person who possessed a flock very commonly took charge of it himself; though sometimes a sort of bailiff was hired to stand in the owner's place, and undertake the management of the flock: for which of course he received fixed wages, whether the sheep happened to thrive or not. A careful attention to these remarks will make it more easy for us to understand the parable of the good shepherd, which Jesus now delivered to the Pharisees.

In this parable he brings to our thoughts one of the eastern sheep-folds, with its high walls and well-fastened door. Suppose the case of a man who had not got into the fold by the entrance gate, where the master would be admitted; but instead of that had taken advantage of some part of the wall where he could get over, and so found his way in; Christ says that such a man could be no other than a thief, who got into the fold for dishonest purposes. On the other hand he supposes the case of a person who had come into the fold by the proper entrance; and says that he would be the rightful owner, who takes care of his flock. When such a shepherd knocks at the door, the servant, whom he had left to watch there, would at once open the gate and let him in. The sheep would know the sound of his voice, and he would be able to call them one by one according to their names, and make them follow him when he wished to lead them forth. When such a master-shepherd desired his sheep to go out of the fold, he would

put himself at their head with the accustomed call, and the sheep would directly go after him, being acquainted with the sound of his voice. This they would not do, if a person not their own shepherd were to call them in the same manner; they would rather run away from him, in consequence of hearing the call in a voice to which they were entirely unaccustomed. Such was the comparison, or parable, which our Lord put before the Pharisees; but they did not in the least take in the meaning of what he said.

Upon this Jesus was pleased to explain in some degree what he meant; opening his explanation with the same solemn words with which he had begun the parable itself. What the door of the fold is to the sheep, Jesus Christ is to his people. Any others who should come to the Jews pretending to be the Christ, and laying claim to His authority, would only be thieves and robbers, impostors, and dishonest. So also in His Church, every teacher whose authority is received before His, robs Jesus of his right: but His true people whether amongst the Jews or the Gentiles, do not admit the claims of false teachers, nor attend to them. Christ himself—Faith in his doctrine, and dependence on his grace,—is the only means of entrance into the true Church;—He is the door. Any one who joins the Church through a true faith in Him, will assuredly be saved from the power of sin in this life, and from the condemnation due to it hereafter. Such faith will besides have the effect of giving him a Christian liberty of conscience, and will prevent him from being confined to the prejudices or opinions of men; he shall as it were be able to go in and out, in the length and

breadth of the Gospel doctrines. Such a faith will also be the means of supplying him abundantly with proper food for his soul, as one of Christ's sheep. (Psalm xxiii. 1, 2.) The object of false teachers, and persons whose preaching exalts themselves rather than Christ, is their own gain ; which they are willing to make at the expence of any, even the worst, consequences to the flock. (Ezek. xxxiv. 1—10, 31. 1 Tim. vi. 3—5. Rom. xvi. 17, 18.) On the contrary the object which brought Christ into the world is, that his people may receive spiritual life ; that having been born again through his gift of the Holy Ghost, they may grow in grace through an increase of that gift continually. (1 John v. 11—13. John xi. 25, 26 ; xiv. 6. Matt. xiii. 12. 2 Peter iii. 18.)

Our Lord then shewed that the difference between himself and all false teachers, was like that between a shepherd who is the owner of a flock, with an interest in them from affection as well as from property, and a mere servant engaged for wages to look after the sheep. He calls himself "the good Shepherd," who is willing, if necessary, to be killed rather than let the sheep be destroyed by wild beasts. On the other hand, a person who is not the master, but whose only interest in the sheep arises from the wages that he is to get, when he sees a wolf coming to the flock, cares nothing for them, but seeks his own safety by running away : and so the wolf seizes some of them, and frightens the rest out of the fold, so that they stray and get lost. Such a shepherd would run away, just because he is no more than a servant hired to do the work, and has no personal interest in the sheep. Jesus is "the good Shepherd ;" he is well

acquainted with each of his people, and they all know him even as God the Father knew Jesus, and he knew the Father. He too like the Good Shepherd of the sheep, was about to sacrifice his life on behalf of his people.

Then Jesus spoke of having more than one fold or division of his flock ; there were other sheep belonging to him, besides those in the fold of which he had been speaking. He meant those who were to be afterwards converted to him, from amongst other nations besides the Jews. All these he would gather out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation (Rev. v. 9) ; they would all attend to his doctrine, and receive the Gospel as coming from him ; so that there would be no difference between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians ; but all would belong to the same church of which he is the head—it should be one fold under one Shepherd. One reason of the Father's love to him was because he was about to die for his sheep, of his own free will, and with the purpose of coming to life again. No person could possibly have taken the life of Jesus by force, but he submitted to be killed of his own accord. He had power to give up his life freely, and after he had been killed he had the power to take his life again. To do this was the commission that God had given him when he came into the world.

In consequence of this parable, and the explanation which Jesus gave of it, there arose another difference of opinion, like that mentioned in the last portion. (John ix. 16. See page 70). Many of the Jews thought he must be under the influence of the devil, and out of his senses.—Why pay any attention to what he

said? There were others however, who had too much good sense to be of this opinion; neither his words nor his works seemed to them to spring from Satan :—a person possessed with a devil would not be able to talk as he did; and could it be supposed possible, that a devil should be able to give sight to a man born blind?

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The most direct application which should be made of this passage, is to warn humble and sincere christians against all teachers of religion whose doctrine promises that people shall be saved, without pointing out the atonement of Christ Jesus as the only way of salvation. There are many such teachers in the present day; though perhaps there are comparatively few who venture to say so much as this in plain words: this makes it the more necessary that, whatever preaching we hear, we should search the Scriptures daily, to see whether their doctrine is according to the word of God. (Acts xvii. 11.) There are some indeed who are bold enough to say in so many words, that our own obedience is the reason why we are accepted before God. To such as these it is not difficult to apply our Lord's parable; and to perceive that, inasmuch as they rob him of his glory in the work of man's salvation, they are indeed thieves and robbers, who have come into the fold by a way which is not Christ. But there are many more who profess to teach the doctrine of salvation by Christ alone; who nevertheless make it to be something so different from that which he has really worked for us, that they are even more dangerous, and may

be said to creep into the fold more craftily, than those who openly deny the doctrines of the Gospel. It will always be found that the object of such teachers is to exalt themselves, however humble they may appear to be: and what our Lord has set forth in this parable should make us all fearful of the danger of being led away by such teaching; and should excite us to much prayerful diligence in comparing the instruction we receive with the holy Scriptures. (Eph. iv. 14, 15.)

QUESTIONS.

Am I easily caught by hearing new but plausible instructions in religion?

Do I continually read the Scriptures, with a view to be kept by them from the dangers of following the erroneous doctrines which are so commonly taught?

2. While this parable teaches us in the first place the danger of being led away by false teachers, it shews us also the great blessing of being admitted into Christ's Church by means of a true faith in his doctrine. He is the door, or only means of entrance; He is the good Shepherd, whose care for his people extends to all their wants, which he laid down his life in order to supply. The expressions by which we are taught this, are very full: if any man enter in by Christ, "he shall be saved;" he shall have Christian liberty, for "he shall go in and out;" his wants shall be supplied, for "he shall find pasture." The object of Christ's coming is, that his people may "have life," and that having been made to live by the Holy Spirit, their spiritual life may be abundantly increased. Nothing can be stronger than these expressions; and persons who profess to believe in Christ, and to be members of His Church, ought to enjoy the full privileges which

are hereby promised. If they do not, it must either be that their profession is not a sure one, and that they have not in fact entered in by the door; or else there must be some sinful hindrance in themselves, which prevents their deriving those benefits which Christ is willing to afford them. (Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12.)

QUESTION.

Do I enjoy all the spiritual comfort and strength against sin, which the good Shepherd is able and willing to afford me? If not, why not?

3. In this parable Christ states to us, in the plainest manner, the mutual knowledge between himself and each of his people. In the first place it is said, not only that he knows them, but that he knows them as well as an eastern shepherd knows his flock—calling his own people by name (that is, each separately), leading them forth and going before them. Every sincere Christian, however poor or humble or low in his own eyes, may take to himself the great comfort of being assured that he is personally known to the Lord Jesus Christ: even from the right hand of the Father. He is still putting forth his sheep; and, by his Spirit, going before them as it were, to lead them in his own way. (Isaiah xl. 10, 11.) In the second place it is distinctly declared that Christ is known by every one of his people. There is a sort of spiritual conviction impressed upon the mind of every sincere Christian; so that, without being able perhaps clearly to account for it, he feels sure that Jesus is really the Saviour he represents himself to be, and that He is still really watching over the Church and each of its members. They hear his voice; they attend to the instructions of Christ,

brought home to their hearts by the Holy Spirit, with a readiness which does not wait for argument, and with a simple dependence which will not allow them to be confused by false teaching. Whatever argument may puzzle them, the influence of the Spirit is on the side of truth in their hearts; while there is no such influence to draw their attention to doctrines of error; for "a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers."

QUESTIONS.

Am I convinced in my heart that I am known by Christ, and cared for by him personally and individually? And do I derive comfort and help from this conviction?

Is there any spiritual impulse which directs me to Christ in simple dependence upon him; and does this make me attend to what He requires of me, without giving heed to contrary opinions concerning him?

4. When our Lord declared that he would lay down his life for the sheep, he expressly added that his death could not have happened if he had not been pleased to submit to it. This means, not only that neither the Romans nor any body else could have killed him, if he had chosen to escape from them; his expressions mean far more than this. Jesus Christ never need have died at all, but might have lived for ever without passing through death, if he had not chosen to allow himself to be killed. Nothing could ever have happened to separate his soul from his body (which separation we call death), unless he had, of his own accord, laid down his life. Death is the consequence of sin, and all men die because all men are sinners; even infants, having in them by nature the taint and corruption of sin (or what is called original sin) though they have not themselves committed actual sin, death passes upon them also.

(Ro. v. 12—14), But the Man Jesus Christ, though made of a sinful woman, was born without sin ; (even without that original sin which all other men are born with), and so became a man, such as Adam was before his fall, when he need never have died. (Gen. ii. 17. Rom. vi. 23.) Having also lived in perfect obedience to God, he had never incurred the necessity of death for himself ; and thus it was that, while he had power to lay down his life, he had power also to take it again ; and that when he did suffer death it was by his own permission, as substitute for others. We can never have a proper view of the great love which was shewn for us by Christ, in submitting to death, until we have a clear understanding upon this point : but when this truth is made plain to our minds, and applied by the Holy Spirit, it fills the heart with a grateful sense of the wonder which is contained in that truth—that Jesus Christ laid down his life for the sheep.

QUESTIONS.

Have I a clear understanding of the truth that the death of Jesus Christ was the result of his own permission in consequence of his love for his people ?

What are the feelings of gratitude which this understanding produces in my heart ?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may be preserved from the evil effect of false teaching ; and may grow in the knowledge of Christ alone.

2. Pray for sincerity in the profession of your faith in Christ ; and ask for grace to be able to receive and enjoy all the spiritual benefits which he, as the good Shepherd, is ready to afford you.

3. Pray for a full assurance of faith in Christ's personal knowledge and care of you ; ask for the gift of the Holy Ghost to make you know him, and attend to his voice, without listening to the teaching of error.

4. Pray to be enlightened so as to perceive all the love which is shown by Jesus in the free Sacrifice of his life on behalf of sinners.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Merciful Lord, I beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church; that being enlightened by true doctrine I may walk in the light of thy truth, and at length attain to the light of everlasting life. (2) Enable me by thy Spirit sincerely to believe the doctrines which I profess, and to know that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; and so comfort me by thy grace, that I may indeed profit by all his merciful care of me. (3) Teach me to know that he is my Shepherd, and that I shall not want; that he will make me to lie down in green pastures, and will lead me beside the still waters. Assure me by thy Spirit that He knoweth me, and loveth me; and grant that I may so hearken to his voice that I may both perceive and know what things I ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same, turning from every instruction that would lead me from him. (4) Give me grace to feel the depth of that love for me and all his family, by which He was contented to be betrayed and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross for us miserable sinners; and bless that love to my own soul, for the sake of the same Saviour, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH PORTION.

The Jews seek to stone Jesus for making himself God.—*Conversation, No. 37.*

PLACE—*Jerusalem :—then on the banks of the Jordan.*

TIME. *About four months before His death.—Year 29.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. x. ver. 22 to 42.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion,

JOHN x. verse

35. cannot be broken *means here* must not be set aside

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

The circumstances related in the last eight portions, took place while Jesus was at Jerusalem, during the feast of Tabernacles (see page 1.) After the account of the parable of the Good Shepherd, no more is told us concerning our Lord, until we hear of him again about two months afterwards at Jerusalem ; upon the occasion of what is called the feast of the Dedication.

Of course we cannot tell where he remained during those two months: but as he never continued at Jerusalem longer than was necessary, and as it was his custom to make Capernaum his abode when not engaged in travelling, we may suppose

that he left Jerusalem after the feast of Tabernacles, and continued in Capernaum until he went back again to the feast of the Dedication.

This feast was not one of those appointed by God himself; but it had been established by the Jews, about 150 years before, in order to keep up the remembrance of a great event which happened in their history. The temple had been taken possession of by heathen people, who had made use of the Holy Altar for the purpose of sacrificing to devils, under the name of false gods (1 Cor. x. 19, 20. Lev. xvii. 7. Deut xxxii. 17) : and when the Jews had got it into their power again, they pulled down the altar upon which such abominable things had been done, built up a new one, and dedicated it afresh to God. Then they established a yearly remembrance of this by appointing the feast of the Restoration, or of the Dedication, for it is called by both names. This feast happened in the winter, about the middle of our month of December.

Upon this occasion our Lord was walking in a public part of the temple, called "Solomon's porch" (Acts iii. 11; v. 12.); when a number of Jews took the opportunity of asking him a question, for which purpose they crowded round him. They wished to know how long he meant to keep them in suspense as to his real character;—if he really was the Messiah, let him say so openly. In answer to this our Lord said, that he had already told them, but that they would not believe what he had said (John v. 17, 18, 43; viii. 12—14, 24, 25, 28, 54, 58); yet the miracles that he performed, as being sent by the Father, were enough to prove, that He really was

the person he professed to be. (John v. 36; vii. 31.) These miracles however had failed to convince them: and he plainly told them the reason why—because they were not part of his flock, by which he meant His true Church. His sheep (as he had already told them, when he explained the parable of the Good Shepherd two months before), attend every one to what he says—He is acquainted with each—and every one goes on in the way in which he leads them. All this he had said on the former occasion (John x. 3, 4, 14, see page 83); but now he added, that He it is who gives to His people eternal life, and that they shall never come into condemnation for their sins (Rom. viii. 1), and so perish. Neither is it possible for any one, by temptation or otherwise, to prevail against any one of His people so as to take them out of the saving power of the Spirit of Christ. God the Father, who gives to him each and all of His appointed people, is Almighty, and greater than any other being. No one can have power to draw away a soul from His Father's hand. Christ and the Father are one and the same thing. (John vi. 37; xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11. Luke xxii. 31, 32. Rom. viii. 28—39. Phil. i. 6. 1 Thess. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 5. 1 John ii. 19; v. 13.)

When Jesus made this plain and strong statement of His divinity, it immediately produced the same effect upon their minds, as when he had taken to himself the name of Jehovah, in speaking of His existence before Abraham. (John viii. 58, 59; page 60.) Considering him to have spoken a great blasphemy, they were going at once to execute upon him the law of God against that crime;

and for the second time they took up stones in order to kill him. While they were doing this, Jesus put them in mind that he had shewn them the power of God, in performing a great many good deeds; and asked, for which of those wonderful works were they going to punish him? They told him, that it was not for any good deed that they judged him deserving of being stoned, but for the crime of blasphemy; for that, though he was but a man, he made himself out to be God. Jesus put them in mind, that in the eighty-second Psalm (verse 6) it is written "I have said, ye are gods;" where that title is applied to the princes and judges amongst the Jews. (Psalm lxxxii. 1.) In the Scripture persons were called gods, who had a charge committed to them by God, to act as his deputies (Psalm lxxxii. 2—4); and with the language of Scripture no one would dare to find fault. And yet when the person, whom God had set apart to be His special Minister and Apostle to mankind, said that he was One with God, they charged him with blasphemy, merely for the use of this expression, without taking into consideration the reality of his claim. If he did not bring any proof, that his claim to be considered as the Son of God was a just one, by performing miracles through the power of God, then they need not believe him: but if he really did such miracles, in order to shew that He had a right to be considered as the Son of God, then even though they did not give credit to his words, they ought to be convinced by the miracles. Thus they might know and ought to believe, that God the Father was in Jesus, and Jesus in God the Father; which was but another way of stating that which had excited

them to stone him—that He and the Father are one and the same thing.

In consequence of his saying this, they again endeavoured to apprehend him ; but he got away from them. It is not mentioned whether he escaped now by exercising His divine power, as he had done upon former occasions of the same kind (see page 60) ; but we are merely told that “ He escaped out of their hand.” He left Jerusalem, and went to that part of the country on the other side of the river Jordan, where John the Baptist began his preaching. (See vol. i. page 108) Here he remained for some time, and crowds of people were continually coming to him ; they compared Him with John the Baptist, who had not performed any miracle, but who had given a testimony concerning Jesus, which was now proved to be correct. Therefore a number of people became his disciples, whilst he was in this place.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See. No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The minds of the Jews were in suspense concerning Jesus, and they reproached him with keeping them in that state ; although he had repeated to them again and again, upon various occasions, all that was necessary to make them feel sure that He was the Messiah. This is just the case with many persons who, having been forced by circumstances to consider the subject of religion, have found quite as much evidence as ought to satisfy their minds as to the truth of the Bible, and the necessity for spiritual religion ; but nevertheless they remain undecided, and require yet something more before they will make up their

minds. The fact is, that none can be in this state of mind, except they who are *unwilling* to decide according to the plain sense of the matter. Our Lord explained the reason of this to the Jews, and his explanation holds true in every similar case. Those who thus resist what ought to convince them, are not God's people, are not Christ's sheep. Whereas in those who are given to Him by the Father the *heart* is turned to *desire* the truth; and therefore their *minds* do not resist it. They delight in those commands of the love of the Saviour which require them to imitate His character; thus they hear his voice, and follow him. In every case where the mind is not convinced of the truth of Christ's religion, after properly examining what He has taught, the difficulty assuredly arises from a disinclination of the heart to acknowledge things which are opposed to its desires. And it is only in the people of God, "whose names are written in the book of life," (Phil. iv. 3. Rev. xx. 12, 15) that the desires of the heart are made to agree with the doctrines of the truth as it is in Jesus.

QUESTIONS.

Am I yet undecided upon the great points necessary to salvation?

Do I think that my mind is in this state because Christ has not told me in the Bible enough to convince me?

Have I searched in my heart to see whether it is not rather because I dislike the consequences which ought to follow from deciding to receive the truth?

2. What powerful comfort is conveyed to the Christian's heart by our Lord's assurance in this portion—that his people shall never perish—that no power can ever prevail to pluck them out of the hand of God! This blessed promise affords the

Christian a very strong motive for diligent obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and for earnest self-examination as to the source of his conduct; (grounded on the proofs of a renewed heart and consistent life) in order that he may possess the comfortable conviction, that he is indeed one of Christ's sheep. In that case he may take the words of this portion as a powerful means of strengthening his endeavours to resist sin, and of comforting him in all distress from a sense of remaining infirmity. And while he may be surrounded by heavy trials, which seem as it were to come by the ordering of God Himself; he may be supported by the fullest assurance, that the end will be to the glory of God, and the salvation of his own soul. (See John vi. 37; vol. iii. page 96.)

QUESTIONS.

Have I reasonable grounds for trusting that I am one of Christ's sheep?

Have I such an humble but assured conviction of this, that I find it to be the source of my strength when resisting sin, and of comfort when convinced of my own unfitness and sinfulness before God?

3. Every time we find our Lord repeating the statements of His own Godhead, he seems to increase the strength of the expressions which he uses. This is the fifth occasion in which he plainly declared, that He is equal with God the Father; and His present words are even more striking than those he before used. (See page 64.) "I and my Father are one and the same thing" (which expresses the meaning of the words in the original language) is as strong a statement as can possibly be made: and the Jews, who heard him speak, understood his words in their strongest sense; for they said "thou makest thyself God," and

were about to punish him accordingly, in the same way which they intended when he had before taken to himself the name of Jehovah. (John viii. 58, 59; see page 60.) Christ's repeating the doctrine which so greatly offended them, shews us that the mysteries of His religion, (upon which our minds are not able to argue, but which must be received in simple faith) are not to be withheld or reserved, because they are rejected, and turned into an occasion of sin by those who will not receive them: but that, on the contrary, they are the rather to be more boldly declared; and will thereby be made the means of separating those who are not Christ's sheep from those who are.

QUESTIONS.

Do I humbly and sincerely receive the doctrines of Christ's divinity in simple faith, as I profess to do by calling myself a christian?

In talking upon religious subjects, do I ever hold back (or keep out of sight) any reference to those mysteries, which may offend or be rejected by those with whom I converse?

4. Our Lord made a remark concerning the hasty manner in which the Jews caught at His *words*, and treated them as blasphemous, without taking time to consider their real meaning, and His just right to use them. This remark may be very usefully applied in the present day; in which many ignorant and hasty persons find great fault with christians, for making use of scriptural expressions with respect to themselves. This is carried so far, that many are made "offenders for a word," when they speak of Christians as "the people of God," or "the children of God." Nay some even of the titles, given to Christians in the Scriptures are looked upon as improper to be used with serious intention. And

in consequence of some having ventured to apply them, the world mark their sense that such an application is improper, by using those names for religious people in mockery and reproof; such, for instance, as "the saints," "the elect," "the called." The manner in which the world use these phrases implies that they consider those christians who apply them to themselves, as committing a sort of blasphemy. The world would be saved from making such an ignorant mistake, if they would read the Bible more, and examine the grounds upon which the members of the Church of Christ lay claim to these and other Scriptural titles. (Rom. i. 6, 7. 1 Cor. i. 2. 2 Cor. i. 1. Eph. i. 1. Phil. i. 1; iv. 21, 22. Col. i. 1. 1 Thess. i. 4. 1 Pet. i. 1, 2. 2 John 1. Jude 1.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever take part with the opposers of Christ's people by using spiritual names in reproach or derision?

Do I ever feel ashamed of being myself called by any of those titles which have been applied to Christians by the Spirit of God in the Scriptures?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that your heart may be made to desire the truth, in order that your mind may receive it obediently.

2. Pray for a personal application by faith of all God's promises to His people.

3. Pray for grace to be kept in the faith of the Holy Trinity, according to the profession which a christian ought to make.

4. Pray that you may never be ashamed of any spiritual title for a Christian, by whatever name you may be pointed out as such; and pray for a sober mind in the use of Scripture terms.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; make me to

desire that which thou dost promise, and dispose my heart to receive the truth of thy Holy Word in the love of it. (2) Grant that worthily lamenting my sins and acknowledging my wickedness, I may be enabled to apply to my own soul the atonement of Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners: so that humbly trusting that I am brought as His sheep to His fold, I may have the full confidence that none shall pluck me out of His hand; and that I may be strengthened against sin, and comforted by the hope of my eternal salvation. (3) As thou hast given to thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; I beseech Thee that thou wouldest keep me stedfast in this faith. Enable me to glory in the cross of Christ; and never permit a false and worldly shame to prevent me from applying with thankfulness every title, by which thou hast been pleased to call thy people in thy Holy Word. Give me a spirit of wisdom, and of a sound mind, in the application of that Holy Word to myself; that I may use it to the glory of the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTIETH PORTION.

Jesus raises Lazarus from the grave.—*Miracle No. 32.*

PLACE—*Bethany.*

TIME. *About three months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. xi. ver. 1 to 44.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

JOHN xi. verse

15. to the intent *means here* in order that

19. fifteen furlongs almost two miles (a
furlong is half a quar-
ter of a mile)

24, &c. resurrection raising of the dead to
life again

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

There was a family consisting of a brother and two sisters, for whom our Lord entertained feelings of particular affection, the name of the brother was Lazarus, and the two sisters were called

Martha and Mary. They happened at this time to be living at a village called Bethany; though we have reason to believe that they were natives of another place in Galilee. (Luke x. 38, 39.) The manner in which they are mentioned at the beginning of this portion, when read in the original language, helps to confirm us in this belief. It appears also that Martha was either the wife, or (as some old authors say) the daughter, of a man named Simon, who had once been afflicted with leprosy, and lived at Bethany. Mary was the same person who afterwards took some precious ointment and rubbed it upon the feet of Jesus, when he was at supper in the house of Simon the leper, and then wiped his feet with her hair. (Matt. xxvi. 6, 7. John xii. 2, 3.) It happened that, while they were all three living at Bethany, Lazarus was taken dangerously ill. The two sisters immediately sent a message to Jesus, to inform him that the friend in whom he took so affectionate an interest was ill. Upon receiving the message, Jesus declared that this illness was not intended to put an end to his life, but was meant for the glory of God; in order that by means of it Jesus might shew his power, as the Son of God, in such a way that the people would give him great honour.

Martha and Mary and Lazarus were the very particular friends of our Lord: yet after he had received the information of his friend's severe illness, he still remained where he was on the other side of the Jordan; he did not attempt to leave the place for two days. At the end of that time however he proposed to his disciples to
into Judea, where Bethany was situated:

they put him in mind that it was only a very short time since the Jews in that part of the country had endeavoured to stone him to death (John x. 31); how could he think then of putting himself in their way again ?

To this Jesus answered by making a comparison ; “ was there not (he asked) a regular portion of time divided for the day, and also for the night ? any person who walked at the proper time in daylight would not be likely to stumble ; but a person who goes out at an unseasonable hour might stumble in the dark.” By this he meant to shew them, that he knew very well what he was about, and how to do what was right at the proper season. But besides this Jesus thought fit to explain himself a little further, and told his disciples that his and their friend Lazarus had *fallen asleep*, but that He was going to Bethany in order to raise him out of his sleep. Jesus made use of this expression in the same sense, in which it is frequently employed in the Scriptures to express the death of a person (Acts vii. 60. 1 Cor. xi. 30 ; xv. 51. 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. Dan. xii. 2. Ps. xiii. 3) : but the disciples did not understand him in this way, and remarked that if Lazarus was able to get sleep he would probably recover ; thinking that Jesus only meant that he was taking the natural rest of sleep. Our Lord however corrected their mistake, and told them in plain words that Lazarus was dead ; and that on their account he was glad the death had taken place at a time when He was not at Bethany, in order that the circumstances might happen which would strengthen their faith ; therefore he invited them to go with him. The Apostles, who knew the danger from which he had so lately escaped

in Jerusalem, thought that it would be running a great risk to go there again. But Thomas (or Didymus, as he is also called, see vol. ii., p. 78) encouraged the other disciples, and said it was better to go with him, even if it were to cost them their lives.

The place to which Jesus had retired, on the east side of the Jordan, was at least two days journey from Jerusalem; from which city the village of Bethany was not quite two miles distant. When our Lord and his disciples arrived near Bethany, they found that Lazarus had been buried four days before, and that the ceremony of mourning with the family was still going on. The custom of the country was, that when any person died all the relations and friends of the family used to come and express their grief, and their fellow-feeling for those that were left behind: this lasted for seven days. A great many neighbours and friends were mourning in this way with the sisters of Lazarus. Our Lord's approach to the village was soon made known: Martha was the first of the family who heard of it; and she did not wait to tell her sister (who had shut herself up within doors) but went at once to meet Jesus. As soon as she saw him, she told him she knew that if He had happened to have been there at the time, her brother would not have died: and there seems to have been some hope upon her mind, as to what Jesus might yet do; for she added, that she was well aware that, even now, nothing that He would ask of God would be refused. Upon this our Lord told her, that her brother should rise again. This Martha took as referring to the last day, when all the dead shall be brought to life again;

and said, she knew that would be the case. Upon which our Lord told her, that He is the one that raises from the dead and imparts the true life. Whosoever believes in Him, even though his soul may have been separated from his body, yet that soul shall have life. And no living person who believes on Him shall ever die ; that is, his soul shall never perish. Jesus asked Martha whether she believed this ; she said that she did ; for that she believed that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, who was come into the world.

After this Martha went back again to the house. Here she found Mary, and as there were a number of mourning friends in the same room, she whispered to her that Jesus had arrived and wished to see her. Upon hearing this Mary immediately got up, and went out with haste to meet Him. Jesus had not yet gone into the town, but had remained where Martha left him. The friends and neighbours who had been sitting with Mary, mourning with her and comforting her, thought (when they saw her go forth in such haste) that she was going to her brother's grave, to give vent to her sorrow there, and they accordingly went after her.

Upon seeing Jesus, Mary threw herself at his feet, and made the same remark that her sister had done before ; — telling him that if He had been present, Lazarus would not have died. Mary was weeping in great grief of heart ; and all the neighbours and friends who had followed her were doing the same. Our Lord felt for them, and partook of their grief, groaning in his spirit : he asked where Lazarus

was buried; and they begged him to come with them that they might shew him. Whilst they were going, our Lord gave way to tears. This drew the attention of the Jews about him, who observed that his love for Lazarus must have been very great; and some of them referring to the miracle which he had lately wrought, in giving sight to the man who had been blind from his birth (John ix. See page 67), asked whether He who had opened that man's eyes, could not have prevented Lazarus from dying.

Our Lord continued in the same state of feeling, groaning in himself as he came to the grave. Like many of the graves in that country it was a cave, the mouth of which was closed up with a large stone. He directed some of the people about to remove this stone. Upon this Martha ventured to remind him, that Lazarus had been dead for no less than four days. In that warm climate the body goes to decay so soon after death, that it is necessary to bury within twenty-four hours after death: the corpse of Lazarus therefore would by this time have smelt very offensively. Jesus in his answer put her in mind how he had told her, that if she would believe, she should see a proof of the glory of God. The people upon this proceeded to open the grave by removing the stone. Our Lord then looking up on high thanked his Heavenly Father that his prayer had been heard. Not that he had himself any doubt of being always heard: but he uttered these thanks for the sake of those who were listening around him, in order that they might believe that He was indeed commissioned by the Father.

Having thus held intercourse with God the Father, in the hearing of the people, He said with a loud voice "Lazarus come forth." At this call the dead man came out of his grave, just in the condition in which he had been buried; the body with the shroud on fastened round the arms and legs, and the chin tied up with a napkin round the face. Our Lord told the by-standers to loosen these bandages and set him free.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See. No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The account of our Lord's friendship for Lazarus and his sisters brings to our minds, in the most touching manner, that Jesus was indeed in all respects a man such as we are, sin only excepted. It is sometimes difficult to settle this point clearly in our minds; and many who believe that, while He is the Son of God, He is also the Son of man, often confine this belief to the mere thought of his bodily nature, and do not take in the remembrance that he has also the heart and feelings of man. The history of His life upon earth shews us the working of those feelings, without any mixture of sin, either in their first beginning, or in their outward expression. Taken in this point of view, it is very delightful to find him giving us an example of that closer and more affectionate feeling of friendship for some particular persons, which forms so large a part of every Christian's enjoyment."—"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." These words are a warrant to justify

each of us in cultivating such special friendships. And we may see too in this portion, how powerfully such feelings of friendship affected his heart on behalf of those whom he loved. Christ loved the whole world, and gave his life for them; but over and above this, his special love for these favoured friends made him indeed "weep with them that weep." (Ro. xii. 15.) The people who saw the tears of Jesus understood from them, that he loved this family in an especial manner; and as we may draw the same conclusion, it should awaken in our hearts an enlarged feeling of sympathy with the friends who are near and dear to us. It must however be always remembered, that in order to copy this example from Christ, we must follow it after a Christian manner. Worldly friendships, between persons who are not bound together by spiritual ties, can never produce a sympathy such as He felt.

QUESTIONS.

Are my feelings of friendship warm and earnest towards those whom I love? and do they lead me to share in their griefs with real sympathy?

Who are my friends, those for whom I entertain particular affection? Are they such persons as I have reason to believe to be real Christians?

2. It may seem strange at first sight, that when Jesus was informed of the dangerous illness of his friend, he should have remained at a distance, and allowed him to die; especially when there was so much real faith in the family, as to make them fully confident that, if he had been present, He could and would have prevented the death. We see however the explanation of this, when we are told that the object for which the

illness of Lazarus had been providentially permitted, was not that he should die, but that God's glory, in His Son, might be clearly shewn. (verse 4.) This accounts for the conduct of our Lord, in staying away until Lazarus had actually died and been buried. The same reason will serve to account for similar conduct in Jesus, towards the friends whom he loves upon earth at the present time. Providential afflictions often befall them, of the most distressing kind: but the divine intention, in permitting them, is not merely to bring about the painful event; God has a purpose beyond this; and that purpose is, that His glorious power in Christ Jesus may be clearly shewn, through some of His believing people—His members in the midst of the world. And it is towards those who possess the like faith as Martha and Mary that He acts thus, and thereby increases their faith, while he makes them see the glory of God. Such persons are sure to send him word (as it were) of their extremity and distress, in many messages of prayer; to which He may return no answer, until the dreaded affliction has actually taken place. In such great trials of faith however He comes near to the Christian's heart: not perhaps in time to effect the direct object for which our prayers petitioned, or in the way we had marked out for ourselves; but in full time to manifest His glory in the way His wisdom had appointed, and so to fulfil the objects for which the trial had been providentially arranged. The check to the expecting feeling of a Christian—the apparent disappointment of his faithful hopes—the delay which seems to render remedy impossible;—all these serve to produce enquiry, and an atten-

tive waiting for the manifestation of God's purposes; and perhaps these things may have been means absolutely necessary to prepare the heart, and to produce the result intended by God.

QUESTIONS.

When I have been in affliction expecting some great trouble, have I looked to Jesus and prayed to him, as being able and willing to help me ?

When expected trouble has happened in spite of my prayers, have I given up my confidence in Christ ? Or have I been able to trust, that He will make His glory appear more plainly in permitting my distress, than in preventing it ?

3. What Jesus said to Martha about His being "the resurrection and the life," is a most important truth, applicable to His people at all times. It is by the power of Jesus that the *bodies* of men shall be renewed and again become the habitation of their souls (1 Cor. xv. 22, 45, 50—57. John v. 28, 29); and it is also by the power of Jesus alone that the *souls* of men (who are by nature separated from God, and dead to all the purposes for which they were created) are renewed through the Holy Spirit, even whilst in this present body; and are made to live in communion with God, and to the fulfilling of His glory. Martha fully believed and expected the resurrection of the body at the last day: but it does not appear that she knew of Christ's present power to raise the dead; though there was in her mind a lingering hope on the matter, mixed with a trembling doubt. Now this is very much the case with many sincere persons; who look forward to what Christ will do in the future state for his people, but have no clear and steady understanding of His power in this life: how he effectually raises those, who take advantage of it, from that dead state of sin and worldliness,

which is the condition of the unconverted, into that lively state of spirituality and holiness which is the beginning of the true life that will never die. A true faith in this is the real secret of obtaining power against temptation ; and until we truly believe this, we do not fully receive Jesus as the resurrection and the life. (John v. 24 ; vi. 47. 1 John iii. 14.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I look forward to the resurrection of the body hereafter by the power of Jesus Christ, with undoubting conviction that it will take place ? And what is the practical effect of that belief upon me ?

Do I believe that the power of Jesus can raise me now from the love of sin, which is a proof of spiritual death, to the love of holiness, which is a proof of spiritual life ? And what effect has this conviction, when I am under temptation ?

4. The friends of these mourners were very much surprized that one, who gave such proofs of affection to this afflicted family, should not have prevented the cause of their affliction ; as it was plain he had power to do. Their wonder may enable us to draw an application, for the neighbours of afflicted Christians, similar to that which has already been made with respect to the afflicted themselves. (See second application.) It is not uncommon to hear expressions of surprize upon occasions when God permits pious persons to be severely afflicted ; ‘ How does this happen,’ is a common saying, ‘ that such a one should be so much tried ? ’ And it is to be feared, that this question is often connected with a suspicion, that he has been guilty of some secret sin, for which God sees fit to chasten him. The history of Job (Job i. 1, 9—12), and the plain doctrine

of our Lord, when such suspicions were felt by those who told him of the death of the Galileans, (Luke xiii. 1—5.) would be enough to shew that all such thoughts are unwarranted. But the wonder, expressed by these friends of Martha and Mary, may serve also as a warning that, when we see Christians in great troubles, not brought on by any fault of theirs, we are to wait with patience, and mark the result ; from which we shall not fail to perceive an increase of glory to God, following upon the painful trials of His people.

QUESTIONS.

When I see Christian people under great providential afflictions, do I allow myself to suspect that there must have been some special reason for the chastisement ?

Do I attend to the consequences of such affliction, in order to observe the power of God's help, and to give Him glory for it ?

5. As this remarkable miracle was wrought by our Lord, with the express object of proving Himself to be the Son of God, it must be classed as another distinct statement of His Godhead. And it makes the sixth plain declaration of this essential doctrine, made by Jesus up to this time ; besides the frequent occasions upon which this great truth may be plainly proved, from what Jesus said or did, even when he did not make such a distinct statement in words. It never can be too frequently urged upon Christians, that to deny or doubt the doctrine that He is the Son of God, equal with the Father, is in effect to charge Him with falsehood and imposture ; and therefore must be altogether inconsistent with Christian faith, and destructive of a reasonable Christian hope.

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever encourage any doubts concerning the supreme divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ ?

If I do, what reasonable expectations can I have from Him whom I charge with being an impostor ?

VII HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that all your affections may be regulated by christian principles, and warmed by christian love.

2. Pray for an unshaken dependence upon Christ under all circumstances ; so that you may fully trust that He will make even your greatest trials glorify God more than if they had not occurred.

3. Pray that, while you look forward with certainty to the great resurrection, you may now be raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.

4. Pray to be kept from uncharitable suspicions concerning the afflictions of others.

5. Give glory to Jesus, as the eternal Son of God.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O God, who art the God of love ; give me the Spirit of Christ, that He may teach me how to form my friendships with my fellow men. Give me the blessing of christian friends, and enlarge my heart in love towards them. (2) Teach me to place above all earthly friendships the love of Jesus ; and give me grace so to depend upon His merciful kindness towards me, that in all the distresses and trials which thy providence may send, I may be comforted with the assurance that thy glory shall be manifested thereby : and grant that in all the changes and chances of this mortal life I may ever seek thy honour and glory. (3) Enable me to live in sure

and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; and grant that **this** hope may be of power to raise me from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. (4) Let my heart be so full of charity that I may never imagine that the afflictions of thy people are such as have been called for by special sinfulness on their parts ; but grant that I may give thee glory for all thy dealings with thy people in their trials. (5) O blessed Jesus, Eternal Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, I desire to give thee all glory, and honour, and praise, and to ascribe to Thee all power, might, and dominion, magnifying Thee for thy great mercy in becoming man, that thou mightest be our Mediator and Redeemer. **AMEN.**

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIRST PORTION.

The High Priest prophecies of the death of Jesus.

PLACE—*Jerusalem. Ephraim.*

TIME. *About three months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURES.

Read St. John's Gospel, chap. xi. ver. 45 to 54.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

JOHN xi. verse

50. expedient for *means here* for the benefit of

54. openly publicly

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

The miracle which our Lord performed, in raising Lazarus from the grave where he had been four days buried, is the most striking that has been related to us in the Gospels. Many of the friends who had come from Jerusalem to mourn with Mary, when they witnessed the power of Jesus, believed that he was indeed the person he professed to be ; and some of them went back and gave an account to the Pharisees of what Jesus had done.

Upon hearing this account the chief priests and the Pharisees called the Sanhedrim together (or principal council, see vol. i. page 258) to consider

what was to be done. They could no longer deny that Jesus performed miracles ; and they were alarmed as to the effect likely to be produced by his doing so many. They thought that, if they took no means of checking him, the great body of the people would give credit to his claim ; and that then the Roman Emperor (upon hearing that the Jews followed this man as their king) would look upon them as rebels, and would send an army to destroy Jerusalem and to reduce the people to slavery.

The High Priest was no longer appointed for life, according to the law of Moses, but the office was taken in turn year by year. One Caiaphas was then in office ; and he told the council that they did not look at the matter in the right light, for want of knowing how to manage such affairs. They did not perceive that their wisest plan would be, to curry favour with the Romans by putting Jesus out of the way (see John xix. 15) ; for it was better that one man's life should be sacrificed on behalf of *the people*, rather than that the whole nation should be ruined. When he said this, though he spoke the thoughts of his own mind, yet the words in which he expressed himself were guided and overruled by the Holy Spirit. Because he filled the office of High Priest, it pleased God to make him His instrument of uttering a prophecy, and foretelling that Jesus was to give his life as a ransom for the Jews ; and not only for the Jews, but for " the people " gathered out of all nations, even all God's children whom Christ should join together in one Church. (Rev. v. 9. 1 Peter ii. 9, 10.) The council followed this advice of Caiaphas as he himself had

meant it, without perceiving the prophecy which God had wrapped up in it: they determined that Jesus should be killed, and from that day consulted one with another, by what plan they might best fulfil their purpose.

In consequence of this determination, our Lord would not continue to appear publicly amongst the Jews; but left the neighbourhood of Bethany, and went to a distant town called Ephraim on the borders of that country which was desert. (See vol. i., page 123.) Here he remained with his disciples for some time in retirement.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See. No II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. There is hardly any thing more wonderful than the different effect produced upon different people by the same dealings of God. A very remarkable instance occurs in this portion. Jesus worked the most astonishing miracle in proof of his Divine nature. It had the effect of convincing some who saw it; but when the Jewish rulers were made acquainted with it, their conduct only shewed that, when the heart is *determined* to resist the power of truth, no evidence will ever produce conviction. The Scribes and Pharisees had asked Jesus again and again for more signs (John ii. 18. Matt. xii 38; xvi. 1); as if they only wanted sufficient proofs, in order to believe what he said. They had now so plain a proof, that no reasonable person could resist it; and talking amongst themselves in the council they did not pretend to deny that Jesus actually did many miracles. Yet not one of them thought of acknowledging his claims, even when they had

all the proof they had pretended to need ; on the contrary, they were only the more determined to destroy him. Just so it is with respect to the Gospel of Jesus. When the heart is determined to resist the doctrines of truth, no argument or evidence will overcome the opposition ; although the mind may be unable to gainsay the proof that is afforded. And when the enemies of spiritual religion are forced to acknowledge its truth, they are then only the more determined to try to overcome its influence.

QUESTIONS.

When I enter into argument about religion, is it really for the purpose of following the truth ? or is it merely to overcome a doctrine which I dislike ?

Do I find that, when convinced I have been wrong on any point, I am glad to alter my practice accordingly ? Or am I only the more set upon finding out ways of excusing what has been proved to be wrong ?

2. The Jewish councillors did not speak, even amongst themselves, of the real motive for their conduct to Jesus, though it was very well understood by each. But they easily found out a reason that would suit their purpose, and make it appear necessary to put him out of the way. Few people acknowledge, even to themselves, their true motives for a bad action ; but they have always at hand some pretence for fulfilling wicked designs, without bringing forward the real reasons. Many a sin that has been thus covered by some plausible excuse, would startle even the sinner himself, if he saw its true motive in its real character. Probably some of these Pharisees even would have paused in their wicked course, if in this council there had been an open discussion, in plain words, about committing a malicious murder.

QUESTIONS.

Do I examine closely the motives which induce me to follow any doubtful course of conduct?

Or do I easily satisfy myself with a ready reason, and shrink from searching into the real state of the case?

3. Caiaphas on this occasion made use of a word which is often employed to overcome right principle—"It is *expedient*." Instead of this word, he might have said *convenient*. People are very apt to think that, when a line of conduct suits their own interest or prevents them from falling into trouble, there is good reason for pursuing it; and so the conduct, which produces the most benefit at the present time to the party concerned, is supposed to be the wisest and best. This is what is called the principle of expediency; and it was upon this principle that Caiaphas gave his advice, to sacrifice the life of an innocent man, in order to save trouble and inconvenience to the whole nation. Such a principle is entirely contrary to the word of God; which warns us that we must not do evil that good may come. (Rom. iii. 8.) No advantage that can be gained, however great, will justify a man in committing a known sin. And even supposing that the consequences, which Caiaphas imagined, would have resulted to the Jewish nation by letting Jesus alone; still these would not have warranted an unjust act against him. It is very necessary to watch over our judgment in every case, where a considerable benefit seems to be within our reach, if we could only overcome our scruples of conscience as to some comparatively trifling matter. The argument "it is expedient" has often prevailed over conscience for a time, and produced in the end grievous disappointment and painful repentance.

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever allow the prospect of advantage, however great, to overcome my resistance against sin?

Is my opinion settled that I can never be justified in doing evil that good may come?

4. The language of Caiaphas was his own, in one respect; and the state of his heart was shewn by the sense that he meant to attach to the word considered in the last application. But the overruling power of the Holy Spirit led him to employ words, for the expression of his own thoughts, which besides contained a deeper meaning, and conveyed a remarkable prophecy concerning Christ. It was in this way that the ancient prophets were made the instruments of conveying the mind of God to future generations: either by expressing their own feelings, under the particular circumstances which surrounded them, in such language as suited also the greater things of God intended in the prophecy (this was frequently the case with David in the Psalms); or else by telling the purpose of the Holy Ghost, without knowing how their language arose, or being themselves aware of the full meaning of what they said. (1 Pet. i. 10—12. 2 Pet. i. 19—21.) The prophets thus employed were generally men of God, led by his grace to love him, and to walk according to his way. But the power of prophecy given to them was not always connected with their personal character. The infirmity of cowardice did not prevent the prophet Jonah's being sent with a message from God (Jonah i. 3; iii. 1, 2); and He made use of the wicked Balaam also, to deliver one of the most distinct prophecies of the Messiah. (Numbers xxii. xxiii. xxiv. 2 Pet. ii. 15. Jude 11.) In the same way

the traitor Judas was commissioned to perform miracles by apostolic power, and fulfilled his commission: while the office of High Priest, which the hardened Caiaphas held, made him the appointed instrument of declaring the true nature and power of the sacrifice of Christ's death.

This suggests an important application, and one which has been too much neglected of late years. The office of the Christian ministry is distinct from the character of the minister; and those who are duly appointed, (or, as the Church expresses it in her twenty-third Article, "lawfully called and sent,") are often made the channels of conveying instruction very far beyond the knowledge which they themselves possess; and sometimes even in spite of a personal character the very reverse of what it ought to be. To a minister of Christ it is very alarming to find Saint Paul suggesting that, while he preached to others, he might himself be a castaway (1 Cor. ix. 27); and such a thought can scarcely fail of producing earnest diligence in personal holiness. But while this is the case as regards the minister, it is a great mistake in the people to neglect the appointed ordinances of religion, in consequence of their private opinion of the Clergyman's character, however well founded. The Holy Spirit has made many a man speak "not of himself," when declaring the Gospel which he little understood; and has conveyed its true meaning with power to the heart of many a hearer, in spite of the insufficiency and unfitness of the Minister. An unfavourable opinion of a Clergyman, should lead to much and earnest prayer for the individual, and to increased watchfulness in comparing his

doctrine with the Scriptures, in order to reject every portion that may be contrary to that blessed word. But such an opinion, however well founded, ought not to induce a Christian to undervalue or neglect the ordinances regularly administered. The Church of England is very clear and very wise in her statement of this doctrine, which is thus set forth in the twenty-sixth Article—"Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and Sacraments; yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving of the Sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinances taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."

QUESTIONS.

In attending to the preaching of the Gospel, do I look to the power of the Holy Spirit in declaring it, or merely to the character, talents, or gifts of the man by whom it is preached?

Do I keep away from Church out of dislike to the minister?

Do I feel disinclined to receive the Lord's Supper from the hands of a clergyman of whose character I disapprove?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that the preaching of the Gospel may always be accompanied by the teaching of the Holy Spirit to your heart.

2. Pray for grace to search into your true motives for every thing which can possibly be wrong; and ask to be kept from being satisfied with plausible excuses for sin.

Pray for a self-denying dependence upon God, that you

may be ready to give up any advantage rather than lose his favour by sin.

4. Pray that you may always have grace to discern the difference between the power of God in his ordinances, and the circumstances connected with the administration of them.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O God, who dost teach the hearts of thy faithful people by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; grant that by that same spirit I may be enlightened to receive the truth in the power of it, through the preaching of thy holy Gospel.

(2) Give me grace and understanding according to thy word that I may be able to search into my heart and discover the true motives which influence me in my conduct; and preserve me from the lightness of mind which is satisfied with easy excuses to justify wrong doings. (3) May I ever be ready to deny myself, and take up my cross in full dependence upon thy watchful providence and and gracious promises: so that no present advantage, no easy escape from suffering, may ever lead me to stifle my conscience for expediency sake.

(4) O Almighty God, who by thy Son Jesus Christ didst give thy Apostles many excellent gifts, and commandedst them earnestly to feed thy flock; make I beseech thee, all Bishops and Deacons diligently to preach thy holy word, and the people obediently to follow the same; and grant that I may have such faithful confidence in thy promised power accompanying thy appointed means, that I may receive the benefit of the same, whoever may be the instrument by which thou art pleased to convey it. Grant these things for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND PORTION

Jesus travels through Samaritan Villages.—*Conversation, No. 38.*

PLACE. *Samaria.* TIME.—*About two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. ix. ver. 51 to 62.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

There is no word used in this portion the meaning of which seems difficult to understand.

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

The time was now approaching when the Lord Jesus was to be put to death, and taken up into Heaven. After having remained therefore for some time in retirement at Ephraim, he set forth with calm determination on his journey to Jerusalem, fully aware of all that was to happen to him. From this time forward we do not find him seeking to be in private, nor did he after this forbid that the miracles which he performed should be spoken of ; but whatever he did shewed a readiness to meet all the consequences of fulfilling his ministry in the most public manner. When about to leave Ephraim he directed some of his disciples to go forward upon the road he intended to travel, in order to prepare

people for his arrival. In the course of their journey they came to a village in Samaria, where it was intended that Jesus should have taken rest. The inhabitants of the village happened to be people who felt strongly that hatred against the Jews, which so divided the two nations (John iv. 9. See vol. i., page 186.) When they found therefore that Jesus and his attendants were travelling with the intention of going to Jerusalem, they would not allow them to stop in their village. Upon this refusal, the disciples who had gone forward to make things ready, appear to have waited outside the village until our Lord with the rest of the party came. When the two brothers James and John saw them standing there, and heard what had taken place, they asked our Lord whether they should do as the prophet Elijah had done, when Ahaziah king of Samaria sent messengers to enquire at the temple of Baalzebub whether he should recover from his sickness. Upon that occasion God had commanded the prophet to rebuke the messengers; and when afterwards Ahaziah sent a captain and fifty men to fetch Elijah, that prophet said "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty;" and the fire did come down and destroy them, as he had said: this happened a second time, when other soldiers were sent for the same purpose (2 Kings i. 1—16.)

In answer to this question of the sons of Zebedee, our Lord turned round and reproved them, telling them that they were not aware what kind of spirit must be shewn by those who were

his followers; for that he had not come down upon earth in order to put men to death, but to save their souls: and they left that village, and went on till they came to another.

Whilst they were on the road to it, a person came up to our Lord, and said that he was ready to go with Him wherever He chose to lead him. To this man our Lord gave the same answer as he had given to a Scribe, who came to him in a similar manner more than a twelvemonth before. He told him that, though even the wild animals had places where they found shelter, and birds too had nests and trees in which they could roost, yet the Son of Man, the new Adam, had no shelter, no abode that could be called his home, no resting place upon earth. (Matt. viii. 19, 20. Vol. ii., page 261.)

There was also a person during this journey, whom He desired to follow him. It happened that this man's father had just died, and was not yet buried; and he begged to be allowed him first of all to go home and attend the funeral. Jesus told him to leave the care of the burial to those who were still in that state of spiritual darkness, which is called in Scripture being "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1, 5. John v. 24); and to go and devote himself without delay to the preaching of the Gospel. (Matt. viii. 21, 22; vol. ii., page 262.)

Another person came of his own accord, and offered to be one of Christ's followers; but he asked permission to go home first of

all, that he might take leave of his family and friends. Our Lord told him, that a person who devoted himself to the Gospel was like a man who set himself to plough; when the ploughman puts his hand to the plough he must look straight before him,—if he turns his eye away to look back, he will not make straight furrows: in the same way a person, who devotes himself to the service of Christ, must continually look straight forward to “the recompense of the reward” (Heb. xi. 26); if his attention is drawn away, so that he looks back for anything, he is not fit for the service in which he has engaged. (Luke xvii. 32.)

It may perhaps appear strange to some, that the circumstances related in this portion (concerning two of the persons whom our Lord met on his journey) should be so very nearly the same as those stated in Matt. viii. 19—22, and explained in portion seventy-five. As the very same words were used upon both occasions, some may imagine that the account in St. Luke’s Gospel relates to the same events as the account in St. Matthew’s. It is by no means uncommon to find even in the Gospels things related so very like other things which had happened before, that it is at first difficult not to think the account is only repeated. This has been already noticed (see vol. ii, page 289); but it may be useful upon this present occasion, to point out some difference in the circumstances which might seem to be the same, when reading the two accounts without due attention.

St. Matthew tells us, that our Lord was giving orders to cross the Lake; St. Luke, that he was

journeying with the disciples through Samaria ; where he had just met with such treatment as was calculated to call forth the repetition of his former remark. In St. Matthew's account it was a scribe who came to our Lord ; whereas St. Luke says nothing about the man who came to Jesus in Samaria being a scribe : which we may suppose he would have done, considering the way in which the scribes are always mentioned. In St. Matthew the second person came to our Lord, and asked leave to attend his father's funeral ; and then it was that Jesus desired him to follow Him. But in St. Luke, our Lord in the first place called the man to be his disciple, and after answering his request bid him go and preach the Gospel. These differences are pointed out, in order to confirm the reader's mind, which however will be sufficiently directed, by reading the two passages in connection with the very different circumstances in which our Lord was when each of them happened.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The conduct of the Samaritan villagers affords a strong instance of the effect of indulged and settled prejudice. It made these people turn away the Saviour from them ; and it forms a striking contrast with their fellow-countrymen of the town of Sychar, who entreated Jesus to remain with them, and found the blessing of his presence. (John iv. 39—42.) The feeling of party-prejudice always produces the same effect, when it is allowed to have its way in the heart. Many, who

have made up their own opinion upon those secondary matters which divide professing Christians, mix only with persons who think as they do; and thus they get so settled in their opposition to others, that they will not even hear what they have to say, nor shew them common kindness. When this is the case, they lose all the benefit which may be got from friendly intercourse with others, who are seeking the truth, however they may differ in some things, and they may also be said to send away the Spirit of Christ, which is the Spirit of love, which "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; hopeth all things, endureth all things." (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7.) That Spirit will not remain, where such self-willed unkindness is shewn; and thus persons who act with such party-prejudice suffer as much loss, even as these Samaritans did by shewing the same kind of feeling.

QUESTIONS.

Do my opinions respecting the matters which divide professing Christians make me refuse to do any kindness towards one who differs from me?

2. It is not only necessary to maintain the right cause, but also to maintain it in a right spirit. James and John would have applied the character of the law, with respect to which "God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29), when they ought to have shewn forth the character of the Gospel, which tells us that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." (2 Cor. v. 19.) The spirit in which they spoke was a strong contrast with

that which appears in the words of Jesus. He came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10) : not to execute the law upon us, but to fulfil it for us;—not to put men to death *for* their sins, and *in* their sins, but to suffer death himself, that he might save us *from* our sins, and so from the second death. (Rev. xxi. 8.) When we meet with violent opposition to our religious principles, (even when we are most sure that we are in the right) we must be very careful not to act against our opposers in the spirit of the law; but to make all such cases the occasions of shewing, that we have the Spirit of Christ as set forth in His Gospel.

QUESTIONS.

Have I any desire to punish those who are opposed to the truth which I profess, when they shew their opposition unkindly or violently?

Or do I rather feel compassion for them, such as produces a forbearance, and a desire to save them from the consequences of their own conduct?

3. & 4. The two Applications of the seventy-fifth portion (vol. ii., page 263, &c.) are also very suitable to the similar circumstances related in this portion.

4. Our Lord's remark to the man, who wished to take leave of his friends *after* he had made up his mind to follow Christ, brings to mind His warning "Remember Lot's wife." All things, connected with this present state of life, must be made secondary to the great object of following Christ; and this should be well considered at the time we first devote ourselves to Him; so that no lingering affection should be allowed to

check our ready willingness to attend above all to the concerns of Christ's glory and our own souls. He that even looks back by that look expresses a doubt, whether Christ is to stand in the first place and to be regarded before every thing else, or whether there is not some earthly affection or interest which ought to stand before him in the heart. The same who said, "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. x. 37), said also "Remember Lot's wife."

QUESTIONS.

Is there anything which would make me doubt whether I should give up following Christ, even out of affection towards my nearest and dearest friends ?

Do I ever wish I might do something like the old things, which I have given up since I followed Christ ?

VII HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may be kept from grieving the Holy Spirit by giving way to feelings of party-prejudice.

2. Pray for the gift of the Spirit of Christ, that you may overcome the evil of his enemies with good, by the way in which you treat them.

3. Pray that you may have grace so entirely to give your heart to Christ, that no affections however right in themselves may draw you back from Him.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee ; mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule my heart. Strengthen me in every good thought, word, and work ; that I may never grieve that Holy Spirit by allowing the self-willed feelings of my natural heart, towards those who differ from me, to resist the power of the Spirit of love.

(2) O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without Charity are nothing worth ; send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into my heart that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues. Grant that in all my suffering here upon earth, for the testimony of thy truth, being filled with the Holy Spirit, I may learn to love and bless my persecutors, and so overcome evil with good ~~to~~ the glory of thy Name. (3) So draw me unto Thee by the knowledge and power of the love of Christ, that I may never permit any earthly affection whatever to stand before him in my heart ; but may always serve him with true readiness of mind and will. I ask this through the mediation of that same Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD PORTION.

Jesus sends Seventy disciples before him.—*Discourse, No. 12.*

PLACE. *Capernaum.* TIME—*About two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURES.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. x. ver. 1 to 16.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

There is no word used in this portion, the meaning of which seems difficult to understand.

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Our Lord was now shewing himself in an open and public manner, in preparation for the great events by which His ministry was to be closed by death (see page 127) : and he intended before arriving at Jerusalem, where these events were to happen, to make a general visitation of the towns and villages which were in Galilee, and on the way he was to pass. Before setting out upon this journey he selected seventy persons from amongst those disciples who had been in the habit of following him ; and he desired them to go forth, two and two, in thirty-five different directions, so that they might visit all the places to which he meant to go, in order to prepare for his arrival.

Before these Missionaries set out, he made an address to them ; in which he repeated much of what

he had said when he first sent forth His twelve Apostles. (See Matt. ix. 35, &c.; eighty-second portion, vol. iii. page 1.) He began by making the same comparison as before, in order to lead them to the exercise of the means through which they were to expect a blessing upon their labours. He compared the multitudes of people to the ripe standing corn ready for harvest; and told them that this harvest of souls was indeed very plentiful, but that there were few labourers to gather it in; he bid them therefore pray to God as "the Lord of the Harvest," entreating him to employ more labourers in collecting and securing this precious harvest.

He bid them set forward; but at the same time warned them what kind of treatment they were likely to receive: it would be like driving lambs amongst a number of wolves; the world in general would be as anxious to destroy them, as wolves would be to destroy lambs. (Matt. x. 16.)

As upon the former occasion so now also he gave them to understand, that they need not be anxious about providing what was needful for their bodies, for that they should be supplied by the special Providence of God. He told them not to take either a purse of money or a bag with provisions, called a scrip (see vol. iii., page 6), or the shoes which travellers were in the habit of using instead of the light sandals commonly worn at home. (Matt. x. 9, 10. Mark vi. 9.)

Our Lord added another direction upon this occasion which he had not given before:—he bid them not stop on the road to pay the usual compliments to any persons whom they might meet. The reason probably was, because these Mission-

aries were to perform their commission in a very short time, and to return to Him before He himself set out on his journey ; and therefore they were to avoid every delay or hindrance in their appointed work, however proper the occasion, or trifling the loss of time might appear. (2 Kings iv. 29. Prov. iv. 25.)

When the disciples took up their lodging in any house, upon going in they were to pray for a blessing upon the family. A particular form was given them ;—they were to say, “ Peace be to this house.” (See vol. iii., page 8.) If any one who was under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and whom Jesus called “ a son of peace,” dwelt in that house, the blessing thus prayed for by the disciples would be confirmed, and the peace given : but if this were not the case, then the prayer would at any rate be returned with an answer of peace upon the disciples who had desired it. (Matt. x. 12, 13.)

When they had once taken up their abode in a family, they were not to change about from house to house, but to remain in the same family until they left that place. They were freely to accept the hospitality afforded them, without considering the meat and drink by which their wants were supplied to be in the light of charitable gifts ; for as servants of God, working for the benefit of the souls of those to whom they were sent, they deserved the support necessary for them, in return for their labour. (Matt. x. 10, 11.)

Upon arriving at any place, if the inhabitants were willing to attend to what they said, the disciples were to refresh themselves with whatever food might be ready for them, without observing

any Jewish distinctions of food; and then proceed to prove the authority of their message by curing such persons as happened to be sick in the place. They were to preach the Gospel; warning their hearers that God was about to set up the spiritual power of His kingdom in men's hearts, and that this kingdom was now close at hand. (Matt. x. 7, 8.) But if on the contrary they came to any city where the inhabitants were not willing to attend to what they said, then they were commanded to go forth into the public streets; and (as the Jews used commonly to shake off the dust which had gathered on their shoes in Gentile lands, in order that nothing that belonged to idolaters or heathen nations might cleave to the people of God) even so the disciples were to declare, that the very dust of the place which rested upon their garments they would shake off, as a witness that the people had an opportunity of coming to God. Their refusing to profit by it, and rejecting the offer of the Gospel, would not alter the fact (of the truth of which they might be fully assured), that the spiritual kingdom which God was about to establish upon earth had really come close at hand to those very people: and their doom in the day of judgment would be heavier than that of Sodom (Matt. x. 15; vol. iii. page 9.)

Our Lord then repeated a remark which he had made, when speaking of the waywardness of those who neglected the ministry of John the Baptist as well as his own. To give an example of the awful judgments, which would come upon any people who rejected the ministers whom he sent forth, he again named the towns of Chorazin and Bethsaida; and denounced a woe upon their inhabitants, be-

cause no proper effect had been wrought upon them by all his wonderful works. If he had gone to Tyre and Sidon (two cities where there was a great deal of wickedness, but where the people being heathens were not, like the Jews, taught to know God) and had performed some of the same miracles there, they would not have been inattentive so long as the Jews had, but would have turned to God and shewn their repentance in the customary way, laying aside their fine clothes, and covering themselves with coarse cloth, and sprinkling ashes upon their heads. But the punishment of the unbelieving Jews would be more severe, at the day of judgement, than the punishment of the people of Tyre and Sidon. He then spoke of the inhabitants of Capernaum, where he had taken up his abode for so long; and said that high as they were in their own esteem they should be humbled, and signally punished for their pride. (Matt. xi. 20—23. vol. II. page 136.)

Our Lord closed the address to these seventy Missionaries with remarks similar to those with which he closed his former address to the twelve Apostles. (Matt. x. 40, 41; vol. iii., page 85.) Every person (he said) who paid attention to what they should declare, by so doing paid attention to Christ himself: while on the contrary, every person who treated their message with neglect, by so doing neglected Christ himself; and neglect thus shewn to Christ was in fact a neglect, not only of him, but of the Father who sent him.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ sent forth these

seventy Missionaries in order to prepare the minds of the people for that last public manifestation of himself as the Messiah, which was to lead to his Crucifixion. A similar preparation was made, for his first shewing himself in public, by the ministry of John the Baptist. This leads our minds to consider, that the appointed ministry of his Apostles, and those who follow them even to the end (Matt. xxviii. 20), is a continued preparation for the coming of that same Messiah in glory. The instructions which Jesus delivered to these seventy ministers are almost all repetitions of what he delivered to the twelve Apostles : so that most of the applications of the eighty-second portion may be suitably used after reading this. But there is one point of difference which may suggest a profitable application. The apostles had been sent as it were upon trial, while our Lord was still in the course of his own ministry : but these seventy were commissioned for the distinct object of preparing the people for Christ's immediate coming ; they were therefore desired to use all possible diligence, and not even to be drawn aside from their great work by the usual requirements of worldly habits. They were to "salute no man by the way." The commission to Christ's ministers in the present day is of equally pressing urgency, as that with which these seventy were charged. Accordingly when persons are ordained to the ministry of the Gospel, they are solemnly charged by the Bishop "to give themselves wholly to this office, whereunto it has pleased God to call them ; so that, as much as lieth in them, they will apply themselves to this one thing, and draw all their cares and studies this way."

When Clergymen are really endeavouring to fulfil this duty, they are often considered as going too far, as requiring too much, and as deficient in proper attention to worldly matters. Such an opinion of them can however only be held by persons who have not sufficiently considered the extreme importance of being ready for the Lord Jesus Christ at His Coming, and have not duly felt the pressing earnestness of His charge to His ministers.

QUESTIONS.

Do I consider the ministry of the Gospel as the appointed means of preparing people for the Coming of the Lord?

Am I disposed to reproach those clergymen, who devote themselves entirely to the work of the ministry, with going too far or neglecting the forms of society?

2. In the instructions to the twelve Apostles, our Lord spoke of the provision that was due to those who laboured in the Gospel, in a manner somewhat different from the way in which he addressed these seventy ministers. The Apostles were told not to lay in a store of provisions and other things for their journey; because being the servants of God, whilst they were employed upon their master's work they might very properly expect that master to support them. They were to look directly to the providence of God, for the supply of what was necessary for them. (Vol. iii., page 7.) In stating the same doctrine however to these seventy, our Lord places it in connexion with a command to eat and drink such things as were given to them by the people in whose house they lodged. This therefore refers to the *means* which God's providence arranges for the support of his ministers; while the former statement referred to the *source* from which all the outward circumstances

receive direction. The two statements together afford one amongst many proofs, that it is God himself who disposes the hearts of people to assist his ministers in their time of need ; that every circumstance by which such help is afforded calls for an especial acknowledgement of God's mercy in the first place, while we also feel a proper sense of gratitude to the instruments he employs.

QUESTIONS.

Am I always ready to afford help and assistance to the ministers of Christ's Gospel, to the best of my power ?

In doing this, do I consider myself as an instrument of God's Providence, by which He provides for His servants ?

3. This address contains a strong proof, how certainly God will call those to account, who refuse or neglect to profit by the ministry of the Gospel. The awful woe which Christ here repeats, and the renewed directions to wipe off the dust of the rejecting cities, should have the effect of confirming in our minds a strong sense of our own responsibility, in having the Gospel preached to us, under Christ's own commission. In judging those who have heard the Gospel and rejected it, a special account will be taken of that ministry of God's word which was so freely afforded them. If heathen people, in receiving the punishment for their sins against the light of nature, may expect (as we are told) a less severe measure of condemnation than those who were witnesses of Christ's miracles ; it should also be remembered, that our Lord stated this as applicable to the case of those who should reject the Gospel preached by His ministers ; and that He made himself one with them in this respect, by declaring " he that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.

QUESTIONS.

Do I consider myself accountable to God for the ministry of the Gospel which is placed within my reach ?

How have I profited by these advantages, and what account may I hope to render of them hereafter ?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that Christ's appointed ministers may be diligent and successful in preparing the people for the coming of the Lord.

2. Pray for a deep sense of the honour of being employed by God to assist in any way His appointed servants, whom He has promised to support by His Providence.

3. Pray for grace to receive the truth of the Gospel in an humble spirit, and to profit by the ministry of the word which God's providence affords you.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Lord Jesu Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee ; Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. (2) Teach me O Lord, to value the privilege of being employed by thy providence in contributing to the support or assistance of thy servants, whom thou hast sent forth with the Gospel of salvation. Enable me with a willing mind and glad heart to take every opportunity of thus furthering thy work ; remembering that thou hast graciously promised, that whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only to any one as a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward. (3) Open my heart by thy grace to attend to the things that are spoken by thy servants in thy name ; that so I may receive thy Gospel in the love of it, and profit by the ministry which in thy providence thou hast been pleased to send to me. I ask all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. AMEN. Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOURTH PORTION.

The Seventy disciples return to Jesus.—*Conversation, No. 39.*

PLACE—*Capernaum.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. x. verses 17 to 24.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE x. verse

19. *scorpions means here certain venomous insects*

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

After having fulfilled the commission which our Lord had given them, the seventy disciples came back to him at the place he had appointed ; which probably was Capernaum. They expressed great delight at the success they had met with ; and especially they told Jesus that, though in the authority which he had given them no particular mention was made of casting out devils, yet even the evil spirits had submitted to them, when they used the name of Christ. Upon this our Lord told them that he had witnessed the fall of Satan, like a flash of lightning, when he was first cast out of heaven. Hereby he led their mind to reflect that He was greater than Satan :

and then he proceeded to enlarge the power he had already given to the disciples. He told them that he gave them such a power, that if they happened to put their foot upon a poisonous snake, or upon those venomous insects called scorpions, (which are very common in that part of the world), though the bite of the animal would most probably kill another person, yet it should not injure them in the least. (Mark xvi. 18. Acts xxviii. 3—6.) To this our Lord added that He gave them authority "over all the power of the enemy;" that very Satan (whose name is "the adversary, or enemy," see vol. i. page 124) whom Christ beheld falling like lightning from heaven; and nothing should by any means do them harm. But although this power was certainly a great distinction and matter of thankfulness, yet the disciples were warned that the great cause for rejoicing was not so much that the evil spirits were under the power of their word; but that the true reason why any Christians should rejoice is, that their names are written in what is called "the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. xiii. 8; xx. 12, 15; xxi. 27. Phil. iv. 3.) By this he meant to shew them that, however honoured they might be by being employed as instruments in God's work upon earth; yet their own salvation, through the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, ought to be the real cause of rejoicing now, as it will be in eternity.

Upon receiving the account which these disciples gave of the success which had followed their short ministry, the spirit of our Lord sympathized with the joy which they had expressed; and He repeated that short prayer of thanksgiving to God the Father, which he had offered up towards the

close of that discourse concerning John the Baptist, delivered at Nain about a twelvemonth before. (Matt. xi. 25—27. vol. ii. page 137.) He thanked his Father, whom he called “Lord of heaven and earth,” thus bringing to remembrance that He was master to do as He chose. And the reason of his thankfulness was, because God had been pleased to set forth the glad tidings of salvation in such a manner, that people who fancied themselves wise and learned could not understand them by their own wisdom (1 Cor. i. 19—21); and yet they were made plain and easy to those persons who humble themselves and believe in simplicity what God declares, just as little children receive the instructions of their parents. (Matt. xviii. 3, 4. 1 Cor. i. 26—29.) Even so had God in his wisdom and love been pleased to appoint.

After thus addressing God, Jesus again declared that the Father had placed all things in his power. He said also that none could understand his wonderful nature as the Son of God, but God the Father himself; nor could any understand the nature of God the Father, but Jesus himself, and those persons to whom Jesus is pleased to make these mysteries appear plain. (Matt. xxviii. 18. John iii. 35.)

After repeating this statement publicly in the hearing of all those around him, Jesus turned to his more immediate disciples; and speaking to them apart he renewed the declaration, which he had made when they asked him to explain the reason why he taught the people by parables. (Matt. xiii. 16, 17. vol. ii. page 209.) He did not indeed make use of the very same words, as he had just done in repeating his thanksgiving; but

he spoke exactly to the same purpose. He said that the persons who were privileged to see these things, enjoyed a particular blessing. Many of God's anointed prophets and kings, in old times, had longed to see the things which had been foretold about Christ, and to hear the glad tidings of His coming into the world, but they had been called out of the world before these things had happened: whereas the disciples, to whom he was speaking, had been favoured both in seeing and hearing the Christ who had been so long expected. (1 Peter i. 10—12. Heb. xi. 39, 40.)

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The power of Satan is very great, and none but those who have no serious sense of their danger can possibly make light of it. But while a sincere Christian is really alarmed at the thought of the multitude of evil spirits who are going about the world seeking rest and finding none (except in possessing the hearts of the children of Adam, and leading them to sin), and while he trembles at the thought of their great leader who is described as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour (Matt. xii. 43, 44. 1 Pet. v. 8); yet may he take sure comfort from the certainty that Jesus, our brother and our Saviour, is greater than Satan, and gives a power to his people "over all the power of the enemy." It is grievous however to find, that this great power which Christ is willing to impart to any of his people, is seldom used in all its fulness and strength. If those miraculous gifts, by which Paul was able to

shake off the viper which had bitten his hand without receiving any hurt, had remained amongst Christ's people, how many would be ready to boast of their use; as was the case in the early Corinthian Church (1 Cor. xiv.) But the far greater power of overcoming the devices of evil spirits, is one which requires at the same time the crucifying of the flesh with its sinful affections, by which Satan obtains his influence over man's heart: and hence it is that the power of Christ in overcoming the devil, which is freely offered to every one of His people, is too frequently neglected, and Satan overcomes us in spite of our Christian profession.

QUESTIONS.

Do I constantly preserve a watchful sense of the danger to which I am exposed from the power of evil spirits?

In every temptation to act contrary to my Christian profession, do I seek the assistance of the power of Christ, by prayer for His Spirit? and do I resist the temptation to sin, in full confidence that by that power I shall be more than conqueror?

2. Our Lord pointed out to his disciples the true cause of a Christian's rejoicing, and placed it in direct contrast with the joy that arises from successful use of powerful gifts. This is not only applicable to the preachers of the Gospel, whose ministerial gifts more distinctly resemble those spoken of by our Lord on this occasion; but it also applies with great force to all those gifts of God, by which talents of particular power are bestowed upon some, such as are not commonly given to others. The use of these talents, whether in private or public, bestows great influence on those who possess them; such success often follows, as may be rightly considered great cause for thanksgiving.

But through the infirmity of human nature, this success often leads to a rejoicing concerning our own powers; which fosters pride and self-righteousness, and greatly endangers our own salvation. Our Lord tells us, in his sermon upon the mount, that in the great day many will say to him "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" to whom he will profess that he never knew them, and who will be cast out of his presence. (Matt. vii. 22, 23.) And St. Paul, as a motive to self-denial, states his fear "lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he should be himself a cast-away." (1 Cor. ix. 27.) With such Scriptures before us, we cannot be too watchful against the insidious effects which natural gifts may have, in drawing off our attention from the great work of making our calling and election sure.

QUESTIONS.

Do I consider myself safe as regards my own salvation, because I have been permitted to be useful in promoting God's work in others?

Does the pleasure which I feel, in the exercise of any natural gift or talent which I possess, take the place of humble rejoicing at the hope that I am a child of God? Does it in any way interfere with that Christian rejoicing?

3. & 4. The second application of the fifty-eighth portion, (vol. ii. page 140) is that which is suitable to the prayer of thanksgiving which our Lord here repeated: and the second application of the sixty-sixth portion, (vol. ii., page 211) is that which is suitable to the Lord's renewed statement of the privileges with which His disciples are blessed.

VII HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for a lively sense of your danger from the power of Satan ; and for the full assurance of faith, that the greater power of Christ will enable you to overcome him.

2. Pray for an humble sense of your own unworthiness, and a grateful sense of God's unmerited mercy in bestowing upon you any gift whatever ; and humbly ask for an assured confidence that your name is written in the Book of Life.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright ; give me, I beseech thee, a watchful spirit against the devices of Satan, and a full faith in that glorious truth, that thy blessed Son was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and to make us thy children and heirs of eternal life. In the strength of this faith enable me to resist the devil, in the full confidence that he will flee from me. (2) I acknowledge, O God, my entire unworthiness of all thy favours ; and I thank thee heartily for every talent, or power, or privilege, which in thy free mercy thou hast given to me ; while I have deserved nothing but condemnation at thy hands. Enable me, I beseech thee, to employ every advantage I possess to the glory of thy name ; teach me to glory in this alone, that thou hast been pleased to bring me to the knowledge of thy grace, and faith in thee : and to give me time and opportunity to make my calling and election sure, so that I may humbly hope that my name is one of those which are written in heaven. I ask all this for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH PORTION.

The good Samaritan.—*Conversation, No. 40.—Parable, No. 10.*

PLACE—*Capernaum.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. x. verses 25 to 37.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE x. verse

25. host *means here* landlord

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Upon one occasion (probably while Jesus was in the Synagogue), one of the teachers of the law rose from his seat, and put a question to our Lord for the purpose of trying him ; and to see whether he would agree with the doctrine which was usually taught. He enquired what he was to do, in order that by doing it he might receive everlasting life. Our Lord referred him to the Bible ; and asked what he found written there upon the subject. The lawyer immediately brought forward two passages, in the books of Moses, which together contain the Great Commandments of the Law. (Matt.xxii.36-40.) He first mentioned Deuteronomy vi. 5—"Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might ;” describing the last word “ might ” by two different powers—“ all thy strength,” and “ all thy mind :” and then he mentioned the passage in Leviticus xix. 18—“ Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ;” only however quoting the last part of this verse—“ thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Upon hearing this, Jesus told him that he had made a proper answer ; and that if he fulfilled what was required of him by these two commands of God, he should have the everlasting life he spoke of.

The Jewish teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees, taught that no other nations were to be looked upon as having any claim to good offices and kindness from the Israelites ; and that none were neighbours to them, in the proper sense of that word, but only their own countrymen. Such was the doctrine grounded upon the connexion of the command in Leviticus with the former part of the verse in which it occurs. This teacher seems to have been desirous of justifying himself before the people in the Synagogue for teaching this shutting out of all foreigners from the relationship of neighbour, as regards the duty of loving them ; and with this view he put another question to our Lord, in order to produce such an answer as would shew that he was in the right :—he asked therefore “ and who is my neighbour ?”

In reply to this Jesus related a story, by which this lawyer was afterwards made to answer his own question. This story may very possibly be an account of circumstances which actually took

place) and this is supposed by many to be the case); or it may be one of our Lord's parables,—that is, a story made for the purpose of giving instruction on some particular point. Whether the event was a real one or not, the doctrine is the same, and the application is equally plain.

Jesus said that there was a man going down into the country from Jerusalem to Jericho. (From this way of speaking of him, we are led to believe that the man was a Jew, though it is not distinctly stated.) He was attacked by highway robbers; who took every thing from him, even his very clothes, and left him on the road naked, after having severely wounded him in the struggle. It happened that a Jewish Priest was travelling that way, who seeing the naked body of a wounded man avoided it, and passed by at as great a distance as the road would admit.

A Levite also came along the road; and observing the body he went up to it and looked upon the wounded man: but, under the same selfish feelings as the priest, he crossed over to the other side of the road and passed on.

After this there came by a Samaritan traveller. Now (as we have seen) the Samaritans hated the Jews just as much as the Jews hated the Samaritans. (Luke ix. 52, 53. John iv. 9.) It might therefore have been expected that this traveller, passing through the country of the Jews, would conclude that the wounded man was a Jew, and that he would have avoided him as an enemy. On the contrary, however, when the Samaritan saw a fellow creature lying in the road in that destitute condition, he took pity on him, and immediately dismounted. Having examined his wounds, he

did his best to cure him, by using as medicine (according to the custom of the country) the oil and the wine, which he had provided for his own use on the journey. He poured a mixture of these into the wounds and bound them up; and then placing the poor man upon the animal which he had himself been riding, and walking by his side he conveyed him safely to the nearest inn. Here he himself attended to him all night; and being the next day obliged to proceed on his journey, he gave the landlord a special charge to pay proper attention to the poor man, paying beforehand two of the common coin called *denarii*, of the value of about seven pence half-penny each (see vol. ii, p. 147), which was a sum of money sufficient, in that country at that time, to pay his expences for a week at least. Besides this he promised, that if the wounded man should be so long before he was able to move that further expences were incurred, he would pay the amount when he came that way the next time.

After having told this story, our Lord asked the lawyer, which person he thought had acted as a "neighbour" to the man who had been ill-treated by robbers. His answer shewed that he had found out from this parable what was the extent of a man's duty as a neighbour, even to a foreigner and an enemy. He acknowledged that the person who had taken pity on the poor man was the neighbour, even though he was a Samaritan. Jesus then made a personal application of the story to the enquirer, by bidding him go and follow this Samaritan's example.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. In this lawyer we have a striking instance of a person with great knowledge of Scripture, and yet not employing it to his advantage, but rather the contrary. This confidence in his Scriptural knowledge made him venture to try the doctrines and opinions of Jesus; and by his answer to our Lord's question he shewed his own readiness. But with all this knowledge, he did not know how to make a proper use of it for the guidance of his own conduct; and he was evidently led into mistaken notions, by mixing it up with the opinions of men. The study of Scripture is the food of the Christian's soul: but in order to obtain proper nourishment from it, God's word must be taken in its simplicity, and be received as the rule by which to regulate the opinions of men; and the opinions of men must not lead us to alter, in any way, that blessed Word. (Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32. Rev. xxii. 18, 19.) Besides this it must be inwardly digested, in order to draw a personal application from each part. Unless this be done, the greatest Scriptural knowledge, so far from profiting us, will be found to be that which most "puffeth up." (2 Cor. viii. 1.)

QUESTIONS.

Have I gained any degree of scriptural knowledge? And if so, do I pride myself upon it?

Do I make Scripture bend to the systems and opinions of different parties in religion? Or do I try all opinions of men by the simple word of God?

In reading Scripture, do I endeavour to find out what personal application I can make of the passage?

2. The statement made by this lawyer, and approved of by our Lord, contains completely the whole law of God, in what has been called the

upon *each*, that makes it necessary for *each* to find refuge by personal faith in that Saviour, who, having borne the punishment due to the broken law by all men, is ready to bestow his pardon, on all who humbly seek for it. (Rom. iii. 9—31; v. 1; viii. 1.) Thus it is that the law is said to be our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ; because, instead of giving us any hopes from God's justice, the more we examine the more we find that it condemns us; and therefore it teaches us that there can be no hope for us except from his mercy in Christ Jesus. (Gal. iii. 11—13, 21—26.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I deceive myself with the notion that my good works are deserving of heaven?

Am I so convinced of my own just condemnation by the law of God, that I earnestly cleave to the hope of mercy through the Atonement of Jesus Christ?

3. What an affecting story is that by which our Lord led the lawyer to decide the question he had put against his own opinions; and how clearly it shews the extent of God's requirements as to our love and acts of kindness towards our fellow-creatures. The principal point in the parable, to which Jesus directs our attention, is the necessity of considering even our enemies as our neighbours. The effect of the narrow prejudices of the priest and of the Levite, was to harden their hearts against the natural compassion which every man ought to feel for his fellow man in distress: while on the other hand this feeling produced much self-denial in the heart of the Samaritan, who with more reason than the others had to suppose the wounded man to be his enemy, yet

considered him as his neighbour in the true and large sense of that word. Our Lord himself made the application, and bid every one of us "go and do likewise." A Christian must shew his desire to obey God; by extending a large and self-denying compassion to all his fellow-creatures who are in need, as far as observation extends and his means will allow. Persons who bestow such benefits as they may be able to give only to those who are their friends, and who are backward in affording assistance or shewing compassion to those who have offended them, or whom for any cause they dislike, may be sure that they have no correct notion of what God requires us to do and feel towards our neighbour, and that they cannot have partaken of the Spirit of Christ. (Matt. v. 43—48. 1 John iii. 17.)

QUESTIONS.

What are my feelings towards those who are unfriendly to me, when they are in trouble?

Is there any thing like secret satisfaction at their distress? Is there any backwardness in doing what I can to relieve them?

In what respects am I self-denying in order that I may do good to my neighbour?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may be always kept free from the effect of the opinions of men in confusing the doctrines of the word of God; and that you may never read the Bible without seeking to apply what you read to yourself.

2. Pray for grace to acknowledge the justice of God in your own condemnation for sin against his holy law; and to seek earnestly the salvation of Christ as your only hope.

3. Pray that you may be preserved from the effect of prejudice and spite against any person whatever; and ask for a larger spirit of love towards all men.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Almighty God, to whom the wisdom of

the world is but foolishness, give me that wisdom which is from above; and enable me to receive the truth of thy holy Word above all the opinions of men. Grant that I may read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest all that thou hast written for my learning, so that I may profit by each portion of it personally. (2) Open my eyes to see the extent of thy holy law, and to understand the utter insufficiency of my best endeavours to attain a proper obedience to it; and give me grace to feel and acknowledge the certain condemnation which thy justice might enforce against me: but lead me also to seek diligently after that blessed salvation which is wrought for us by Christ Jesus, in whom alone I place my hope of thy pardoning mercy. (3) O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, send thy Holy Spirit, and pour into my heart that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee. Preserve me by this Spirit from all prejudice and enmity against any one; and enable me to do unto others even as I would they should do unto me. Hear me for Christ Jesus' sake. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIXTH PORTION.

Jesus in Martha's house.—*Conversation, No. 41.*

PLACE. *Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURES.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. x. ver. 38 to 42.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LULE x. verse

40. cumbered *means here* too much occupied

care mind

41. careful full of care

42. part portion, lot

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

It appears that our Lord had now set forth, in a public and open manner, upon that journey towards Jerusalem which he proposed when he left his retirement at Ephraim; and which he knew would end in his being "received up" into heaven after his death and resurrection. (Luke ix. 51, see page 126.) Having passed through Samaria into Galilee, he had sent forth the seventy disciples; and waited for them most probably at his usual abode, Capernaum, where the circumstances explained in the last portion must have taken place. From this time until his arrival at Jerusalem, we find frequent statements which prove that he was

gradually journeying onward towards that city. (Luke xiii. 10, 22, 31—33 ; xiv. 25 ; xviii. 11. Mark x. 17, 32. Luke xviii. 31, 35 ; xix. 1, 28. John xii. 1. Mark xi. 11. 11.) A recollection of this remark, during the remainder of the history, will be of important assistance in understanding it more fully.

As our Lord was travelling with his disciples, they came to a village, the name of which is not mentioned ; but we are told that Martha the sister of Lazarus had a house there. This village could not have been Bethany where Lazarus had died, and where he had been raised from his grave (see page 103), for that place was not far from Jerusalem (Luke xix. 29. John xi. 18) ; while this village must have been in Galilee, a long way off from Bethany. Bethany is indeed said to have been “ the town of Mary and her sister Martha ” (John xi. 1) : but the manner in which this is stated in the original Greek, shews that by that expression is meant, that at that time they were inhabitants of the place, not that they were natives ; and there are several other reasons for supposing that Mary and Martha were Galileans. At all events it is certain that in this village, to which our Lord now came, Martha had a house, in which he took up his abode.

Mary, the sister of Martha, had already been instructed by our Lord ; and when he now came into the house, she laid aside every other occupation that she might sit at his feet as a disciple ; and profit by the opportunity of hearing him converse. Martha, who was a sincere believer in Jesus (John xi. 21—27), upon receiving this visit from him, was so busied in making

what she considered fitting preparations to do honour to her guest, that she could not attend to any thing else ; and finding that it gave her a great deal to do, and that her sister Mary afforded her no assistance, she was vexed at being thus left to do all the work by herself ; and went to Jesus to complain of her sister. She said that he did not seem to mind Mary's leaving all the necessary household duties to be done entirely by her ; and she begged him to desire her to come and take a share of the task.

Our Lord in reply quietly and affectionately rebuked her ; repeating her name, as those do who would awaken a sense of shame in the person to whom they speak. He told her plainly, that she allowed her mind to be anxiously occupied and easily vexed about many things ; implying that they were comparatively of little importance. There is only one thing which it is worth while to secure with all earnestness and anxiety, because that one thing is the only matter of real necessity. Now Mary had set her heart upon securing that one thing, which was the good portion—Christ's saving word, and of this she should not be deprived.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. There is hardly any infirmity to which Christians are more liable than having the mind so taken up with attention to what seem necessary duties, that their thoughts are distracted from those means of grace which are needful for the support of spiritual life. Unless this infirmity

be resisted and corrected, worldly occupations will increase so much upon us, as to leave no room for serious study of the Bible; still less for regular returns of quiet seasons of prayer, and intercourse with Christ through his Spirit. Small matters grow in our minds to be of great importance, and to stand in the place of things that are really necessary; and thus we become troubled about many things, to the neglect of the one thing needful. The natural consequence of this is, that persons who are thus cumbered on the one hand, while they deprive themselves of spiritual helps on the other, are apt to be easily vexed and fretted by the trifling hindrances which constantly occur to them; and especially they feel annoyed, when the labour of their many little things happens to be increased by the absence of a like feeling in those with whom they live. This is often the source of a complaining spirit amongst members of the same family; even between those who are really serving the same Lord, and seeking the same salvation. Persons of this disposition sincerely think themselves aggrieved; so much so, that they frequently bring their griefs and complaints before Christ in prayer. To all such our Lord gives an answer in this reply to Martha, and an humble attention to his gentle reproof would produce the blessing of correcting the evil.

A particular instance of this kind of infirmity may be seen in the complaints of those, upon whom some additional trouble is laid in order that other members of the family may attend the public means of grace. How often has the necessity of attending to an infant, or necessary domestic

concerns all alone on the Sabbath (while a fellow-servant, a husband, or a mother has gone to church) been the means of producing such fretful complaints as Martha's.

QUESTIONS.

Do I allow trifling matters or worldly duties to take off my mind from spiritual improvement?

When my own work is increased, because another person is profiting by the means of grace, am I fretful and complaining, or cheerful and diligent?

2. "One thing is needful:" that one thing is to be partaker of the Spirit of Christ. If we have Him, all things are ours (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23); and none of the many things of this world can be the source of serious trouble. It is a happy and blessed portion, if we possess Christ. But one mark of our being thus blessed is—that in our hearts we have willingly chosen to belong to Christ rather than to belong to the world. Unless we have this willingness of heart on our parts, we have no reason to hope that we are one of those who are chosen of God and given to Christ. But on the other hand, no power of men or devils can pluck from his hands those who are thus given to him (John x. 17—30.) The blessed inheritance of Christ shall never be taken from those whose hearts are willing to possess it.

QUESTIONS.

Is it the desire of my heart, that above all things I may possess the Spirit of Christ?

Do I draw comfort from the hope that this very desire is an earnest one, and that His Spirit shall never be taken away from me.

VII HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that your mind may be so set upon taking every possible means for your spiritual improvement, that the necessary duties of your station may always take their proper place in

your attention, and never distract or encumber your thoughts : and ask for the blessing of a gentle temper, when your labour is increased for the spiritual benefit of others.

2. Pray that your heart may freely and affectionately choose the portion of a true christian whatever inconveniences or self-denial it may produce in the world ; and ask for the comfortable assurance that his grace shall be continued unto you even to the end.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O merciful God, let the Spirit of Christ wean my affections from this world, and fix them on things above ; so that worldly matters may never hinder me from seeking the spiritual helps, which can enable me to do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. May I so order all my duties, that they may never draw my thoughts away from Christ ; and whenever those duties become more heavy by the absence of others who might have assisted me, let me not give place to a complaining temper. (2) Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things, graft in my heart the love of thy name, increase in me true religion, nourish me with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep me in the same. Comfort me also with the assurance, that thou wilt never suffer that blessed portion to be taken from me, which thou hast given me the heart to choose through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED & TWENTY-SEVENTH PORTION.

Jesus teaches how to pray.—*Discourse No. 13.*

PLACE. *Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURES.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xi. ver. 1 to 13.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUXE xi. verse

8. Importunity *means here* frequent asking.

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

As our Lord was proceeding on his journey toward Jerusalem (see page 161), upon one occasion, when according to his custom he was engaged in private prayer (Luke vi. 12 ; ix. 18, 28 ; xxii. 39—4b. Heb. v. 7.), his disciples waited without interrupting him, until he had finished his devotions ; and then one of them put him in mind that John the Baptist had given instructions to his followers how they were to pray ; and begged him to do the same for them.

Jesus immediately complied with their request. He referred them to the prayer which he had taught them, in his Sermon on the mount, near Capernaum ; and repeated it almost word for word,

telling his disciples that when they prayed they were to use those words. The words themselves need not be repeated here, as they were fully explained upon the former occasion (Matt. vi. 9—13. See vol. i. page 297). The only differences are these: then our Lord introduced the prayer by telling his disciples to pray “after this manner,” here he tells them when they pray to “say” these words; in the prayer itself that which he before called “this day,” he now speaks of as “day by day;” and what he formerly called “our debts” he here mentions as “our sins.” The only other difference is, that our Lord left out the words, with which he had before closed the prayer, “for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

Jesus then put a case to his disciples, as a comparison by which they might understand the necessity of being very urgent and frequent in prayer. The case was this. Suppose a person to receive an unexpected visit from an acquaintance who was travelling, and arrived at his house in the middle of the night. It happened that the house was entirely unprovided with food to refresh him after his journey; and at such an hour none could be procured from the markets or shops. But this person, having a friend living near, went to him and roused him from his sleep; telling him the case, and requesting him to lend him three loaves of bread. The neighbour hearing this call while he was in bed within the house, was unwilling to be disturbed. He answered to the friend who knocked at the door, that it was fastened, that himself and his family were all at rest, and that he could not get up at such a time to give

him what he wanted. But the friend still went on knocking at the door; till the neighbour, who had refused to rise from his bed to accomodate a friend, yet at last (because he would keep on making the same request, in spite of being put off so long) got up, and gave him all that he wanted.

After explaining this case, our Lord proceeded to apply it. He told his disciples that they were to ask God for what they wanted, with the same urgent repetition that this man had used to his friend; and that at last it would be granted. He bid them seek with the same constant enquiry, and then at last they would find. He bid them knock as it were at the door of heaven, with the same "importunity" as that with which this man knocked at his friend's house, and at last the door shall be opened.

Strong as is this statement, yet did Jesus give more strength to it, by adding that "every one" who asks in this manner shall receive what is wanted;—that whosoever goes on with such perseverance in seeking, shall assuredly find what he seeks;—that any one who will not be put off from knocking, shall have the door opened to him.

Our Lord was then pleased to shew the reasonableness of such a result: and for this purpose he appealed to the feelings which a father's heart experiences towards his children. When a son comes to his father for a supply of food proper and necessary for him, is it likely that instead of a loaf of bread, the parent would mock his son with something that looked like it indeed, but which turned out to be a stone? When the son wants a fish, would the father supply him with a snake? When the son comes for an egg, would

the father offer him a poisonous reptile? Certainly not. Such fatherly love is a remains of God's image in our hearts, though, being children of the fallen Adam, we have all turned to evil and corrupted our best affections, it cannot therefore be supposed that the perfect and Holy God, after whose image man was made, and who bids us call him "our Father," would act in a way less kind than this. On the contrary, much rather will the Heavenly Father give even his own Spirit to his children who ask it of him. (Isaiah xlix. 15.)

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. This is a fresh instance in which we perceive the habits of our Lord Jesus Christ, as regards the exercise of prayer. In the texts referred to in the explanation, we may see how constantly he prayed; and this affords us, both a striking instance of the reality of his manhood, and also an example for us to follow. Habitual intercourse with God is absolutely necessary to Christian life. In proportion as the sense of our need, and our trust in His love increase, our hearts will wish to express that need and that trust in prayer. Whilst on the other hand, in proportion as we fail to realize the presence of God, and to approach his throne of grace, our hearts are the more easily drawn off to worldly affections and selfish gratifications. And thus it is that christian life is sure to languish unless we have that habit of mind, which is called in Scripture "continuing instant in prayer" (Rom. xii. 12); that is, being in a state of readiness always to apply to God, under a sense of his presence and willingness to

hear at all times and seasons. Regular prayers at night and morning will be one certain consequence of such a habit, and will always be found useful in keeping the mind in order on this point. But these are not enough: persons who have scarcely any sense of God's presence, or of the necessity for real intercourse with him, may do thus much without praying at all in the right sense of the word. Those who do really pray at such times will besides strive to live all the day long in a remembrance of God's presence; which will lead them to lift up their hearts to him, in secret prayer, upon the many occasions which offer themselves. (1 Thess. v. 17.) Thus they may be said to walk with God; and in so doing to follow at an humble distance their great example, Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS.

Am I satisfied when I only say my regular prayers, morning and night?

Or do I strive to keep up intercourse with God on other occasions in the course of the day?

2. Whatever objections some persons make to the use of a form of prayer, there can be no doubt that our Lord Jesus Christ repeated that form which we call the Lord's Prayer; and upon this second occasion he desired his disciples when they pray to say these words. This does not suppose, that no other than a form of prayer is *ever* to be used; but only shews the unscriptural nature of those objections, which imagine that a form of prayer is *never* to be made use of. When Christians assemble together for the purpose of worshipping God, they may agree that one amongst them should speak to God on behalf of the whole; and may trust to that one to give expression to their wants, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

But while this is very fitting upon some occasions, it has one disadvantage,—especially where large numbers are assembled ; there may be so much variety in the feelings of different persons, that the prayers of the one, who speaks according to his own state of mind, may not be in agreement with the feelings of many who are endeavouring to join him. On the contrary, when the subjects of prayer are expressed in words written down, the persons who assemble together may all be acquainted with them before they come ; each person has knowledge beforehand of what is to be said, and may strive to bring his heart into accordance with it. In arranging forms of prayer the great point should be, to take care that the thoughts should be such, as are according to the mind of the Holy Spirit, discovered in the Scriptures. When prayers so arranged are made public, it may be fairly expected that sincere Christians will use them to advantage ; and persons who are not sincere Christians, cannot expect advantage from the outward use of any kind of prayer. The Liturgy of the Church of England is such a Scriptural form of prayer ; one which spiritual Christians have constantly found a useful means for expressing their own desires at the throne of grace ; whilst they have also had the benefit of joining with many of their fellow christians, in the “ unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.”

Besides the sanction which our Lord thus gives to the use of forms of prayer in general, his words contain a direct command, when we pray to add that particular form he then gave ; which is the reason why the Church has inserted it upon every occasion of public worship.

QUESTIONS.

Do I strive to profit by the forms of prayer, which the Church has appointed ?

Do I consider them well, in order to bring my heart into an agreement with them ; finding that they are in accordance with the Holy Scriptures ?

Do I endeavour to conform my thoughts and desires to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer ?

3. Applications of the several petitions of the Lord's Prayer have already been given, when that prayer occurred in the Sermon upon the Mount. Those applications should be read also with this portion. See applications 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8., vol. i., page 303.

4. The object of the comparison made by our Lord in this portion, is to urge his disciples to use importunity in prayer. Just as the man who wanted the loaves obtained what he required, because he would not be put off, but repeated his request until it was successful ; even so our Heavenly Father wishes us to act when we feel the want of that one thing needful, the Holy Spirit. In such comparisons as these, the likeness to the character of God is only meant to be shewn as to the principal point set forth :—for instance our Lord afterwards enforced the very same subject as that now before us, by drawing a contrast between the just God and an unjust judge. (Luke xviii. 1—8.) Much in the same way he contrasts, in this portion, our Holy Father in heaven, with the feelings of a father amongst corrupt and fallen men. The object in both cases is to shew, that “ men ought always to pray and not to faint.” What we are to understand therefore is, that when our hearts desire any spiritual benefits, we should ask for them ;

not merely once, or a few times, but with increasing perseverance; we should not take the delay in answering our prayers for a sign that God does not hear them, or will not grant our request. But on the contrary, what our Lord has here said, should rather encourage us to go on without weariness, in the confident hope that at last we shall meet with success.

And if we come to consider how this may be accounted for, we may see good reason for some such trial of the sincerity and faithfulness of our prayers. If we are in earnest in what we ask, and have a real desire and value for it, we shall not be easily put off; and then our Lord encourages us to go on asking. If, on the contrary, we really put no great value upon that which we seek, but merely pray from a notion that it is proper to make such petitions; then we shall not persevere, neither shall we be in a state fit to receive any spiritual blessing. Whatever be the object of delay, we may be quite sure that persevering prayer shall never be in vain; for it is expressly stated by our Lord, that every one who thus asketh receiveth.

QUESTIONS.

Do I pray earnestly and repeatedly to God for His Holy Spirit?

Am I discouraged because I find so little apparent effect from my prayers?

Do my prayers become formal, because the benefit of them is not sufficiently manifest to myself?

5. Our Lord appealed to men's feelings as fathers, in order to encourage us to pray to our Father in heaven. This he had done before, in his Sermon on the Mount (Matt. vii. 11; vol. i., page 335, and 340); and upon that

occasion also he made the distinction, between the perfect holiness of God and the evil nature of man. The words of Jesus "ye being evil," affords the strongest confirmation of the doctrine of what is called "original sin"; that is, the effect of Adam's fall, which has produced a sinful tendency to evil in the heart of every one of his children. It is not to cruel and unnatural fathers that our Lord refers; but to those who "know how to give good gifts unto their children,"—to those parents, who still so far retain the image of God given to man at the creation, as to feel in a great degree the good affections that man was meant to have: and it is *these* fathers whom he calls *evil*. Such a statement could not have proceeded from the lips of him who is THE TRUTH, unless that doctrine concerning the general corruption of the human heart, which is found throughout the Scriptures, were indeed true.

QUESTIONS.

Am I firmly convinced of the truth of the doctrine of original sin? and do I feel assured that that natural evil in myself would justly bring me under the wrath of God, if it were not for the atonement made by Jesus Christ?

VII HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Ask for grace to be instant in prayer, and to realize the presence of God constantly; and especially to follow with your heart those forms of spiritual prayer which you speak with your lips.
2. Ask for a spirit of patience and perseverance in prayer.
3. Pray for a right sense of the sinfulness of our natural hearts, and for an humble conviction of the personal evil of your own.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Merciful God, who alone canst direct the desires of our hearts to that which is pleasing in

thy sight, give me a spirit of grace and supplication, that I may ever be continuing instant in prayer. Pardon the wickedness of my nature, and the many wanderings of thought which distract me when joining in common prayer; and grant that my heart may ever follow and intend the meanings of those words which my lips utter. (2) Let me never be weary nor faint in the exercise of that prayer, which brings me into intercourse with thee by thy Holy Spirit: but give me patience to persevere in seeking those things, which thou hast promised to all that ask faithfully. (3) Grant that, knowing how truly corrupt is the source of my wishes and desires, I may be watchful over them; under a deep conviction that the principle of evil, with which I was born, renders me offensive to thine infinite purity, and would justly cast me out of thy sight, but for the atonement and mediation of thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. AMEN

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. AMEN.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-EIGHTH PORTION.

Jesus casts out a dumb spirit.—*Miracle, No. 33.—Discourse, No. 14.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xi. verses 14 to 26.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xi. verse

17. desolation *means here* ruin

22. his armour the things with which a
man protects his body
in battle

spoils goods taken from an
enemy

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

In the course of our Lord's journey, upon one occasion he was manifesting his miraculous power, by releasing an unhappy person from the power of an evil spirit which had made him dumb. As soon as the devil had yielded to Christ's power and left the man, he was able to speak ; and the people

who heard him were very much astonished. There were however some amongst them, who repeated the wicked and foolish charge which had before been made by the Scribes and Pharisees, when Jesus performed a still greater miracle, in relieving a person from an evil spirit which had made him both blind and dumb. (Matt. xii. 22—24. Mark iii. 22.) They declared, that when Jesus cast out devils he acted by the power of Satan, the chief of the devils; to whom they gave one of the names by which he was commonly known, Beelzebub. (See vol. ii., page 160.) There were others also who made the same demand of him, which had before been made more than once (Matt. xii. 38; xvi. 1); and in the same unbelieving spirit, merely to try his power.

Jesus was perfectly acquainted with their motives, and the thoughts which passed in their minds. He condescended in the first place to answer the charge made against him; and this he did nearly in the same words, as he had done upon the former occasion. (See vol. ii, page 160.) Was it likely that Satan would overthrow his own power; by making use of one of his servants, to cast himself out of another of his servants. If the people that inhabited the same country were divided into two parties, and fought one against the other, the government of that country could not go on, and the people would be ruined. The same might be said of the members of a family; if they were at variance among themselves, things could not possibly be carried on, so that the family must be broken up. And thus too it must be with Satan: if his power in one person rise up against his power in another

person, and one part oppose the other, Satan would no longer be chief, his rule would be at an end. Jesus told them, that this argument was sufficient to answer their charge against him, of casting out devils by the power of Satan.

The case of people being possessed by the devils was so common, that many persons had undertaken to cast them out; these were called exorcists, and used to occupy themselves in this way as a matter of business. (See Luke ix. 49. Acts xix. 13—16, see vol. i. p. 225.) Our Lord reminded the Pharisees of this; and asked them how they made any distinction between His casting out devils (which they had said was by the power of Beelzebub), and their fellow-countrymen casting out devils. The fact, that the Scribes and Pharisees found no fault of this kind with the Jewish exorcists, would decide against their opinion of the means by which Jesus exercised this power. And if it was not by the power of Satan that Jesus cast out devils, then it must be by the power of God; and the power of Satan being thus overthrown shewed that the kingdom of God was certainly come amongst them. Our Lord then put forth a parable or comparison upon this subject. Suppose a strong man had quiet possession of his house, and another person wanted to come and take his goods away from him; this other man would not be able to do so, unless he could first overcome the strong man who guarded his house: when he had conquered him and tied him, then he might go into the house and plunder it, but not till then.

Jesus then set aside the wicked opinion which the Scribes and Pharisees had expressed of Him,

by declaring plainly, that whosoever was not on His side, standing against Satan, was in fact His enemy, and taking the side of Satan. This was as much as to say, that there was no possibility of being carelessly indifferent to Christ, or of leaving the matter of religion as one that need not be thought of : whoever is not gathering in the fruits of the Spirit which will hereafter be enjoyed with Christ, utterly wastes his life, and must expect no harvest of blessing in eternity ; but is like a man who scatters uselessly that seed which might, if properly employed, be the means of producing such a harvest.

Our Lord then applied, as upon the former occasion, the same fearful comparison between the state of a person out of whom the evil spirit went for a season of his own accord, and that state which he had just described, when the strong man who possessed the house was first overcome and bound. (Matt. xii. 29.) He said that when an evil spirit is only gone out of a person, without being forced to go by a power greater than his own, he is as uneasy and wretched as a man would be in a hot parched sandy desert ; the evil one tries in vain to find any ease or rest, and in this condition he determines to go back again into the person whom he had for a time left, and whom he calls his own house : he finds such a person's heart unoccupied by better affections, and quite ready to receive him ; just as a house would be prepared for the return of the master, with no other tenant living in it, but cleaned and properly furnished. The wicked one, however, does not return alone ; but taking seven other of his fellow spirits more wicked than himself,

they take possession of the house, and live in it: that is, they enter into the heart of such a person and rule there, plunging him into all wickedness; so that the condition of a man, after being thus left for a season by the evil spirit, without having given himself up to the power of Christ, is much more dreadful than his former one. In making this fearful statement, our Lord applied it directly to the set of people to whom He was speaking, and said that such would be the case with that wicked generation.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

Suitable applications of the whole of this portion have been already given, when the similar circumstances were explained in the 61st & 62nd portions: the following should be read with this portion.

1. First application, volume ii, page 165.
2. Second application, volume ii, page 166.
3. Third application, volume ii, page 177.

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray to be kept from the prejudices which your own heart is likely to raise against the humbling doctrines of the Gospel.
2. Pray that the Spirit of God may take complete possession of you, and entirely overcome the influence of the devil.
3. Pray that the Spirit of Christ may take possession of your heart, and so prevent the evil one's return.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid ; keep me from all hidden evils and prejudices, which disincline my heart from humbly receiving thy Holy Word. (2) Send down thy Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus, to take entire possession of my heart ; that I may devote myself in spirit, soul, and body to Thy service. Guard me against the devices of Satan, and enable me to overcome all his temptations. (3) Make me so to live according to the example of Jesus, that my conduct may be as a bright light, plainly shining by His Spirit within me ; and let every evil thing in me be so corrected, as to prove that the evil one has not withdrawn his power from me to return again ; but that he has been driven away by the greater power of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.



ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINTH PORTION.

Jesus again refuses to give a sign.—*Discourse, No. 15.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xi. ver. 27 to 36.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

There is no word used in this portion, the meaning of which seems difficult to understand.

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

While our Lord was discoursing concerning the power of the devil (as we have heard in the last portion, a woman who was present gave vent to her feelings of delight at hearing him ; and called out aloud that the woman who had given birth to him and brought him up, was indeed a happy mother : upon which Jesus took occasion to say, that the true happiness and blessing was in being taught what God has declared in his word, and in being enabled to live according to it. (Matt. vii. 21—27. Luke vi. 46—49.)

By this time a very great crowd of people had gathered around him. At the beginning some of them had desired him to give them a sign from heaven, to prove that he was authorized by God :

he now replied to this demand, not by giving the sign they required, but by referring to the answer he had before given, and by repeating much of it. (Matt. xii. 38—40.) He told them that they were a wicked set of people, who wanted to have more evidence of his authority: but the sign or proof they wanted should not be given. The only proof they should have, would be one like that which was given by the prophet Jonah (for an account of which see vol. ii. page 172). In the same way that Jonah's being brought safely to Nineveh, after having been thrown into the sea, and lying three days within the body of a whale, was a proof to the Ninevites that he was sent by God; so also Christ's resurrection, after having been killed and left three days in the grave, would be the proof afforded to the Jews, who were asking a sign of him, that he really came from God.

Jesus then enforced the same warning which he had given, when making the answer before. (Matt. xii. 41, 42; vol. ii, page 173.) On the day of judgment, (He said) the Queen of Sheba would appear before God, together with the people to whom he was speaking, and her conduct would serve as a proof how completely they deserved to be condemned; for she, who lived a very long way southward of Jerusalem, had come all that distance on purpose to satisfy herself as to what she heard concerning the wisdom of king Solomon. (1 Kings x. 1—13. 2 Chron. ix. 1—12.) Jesus, who was then talking to them, was greater in wisdom than Solomon; but they had no desire to hearken to His wisdom, and only listened to him in order to find fault. So also the inhabitants of Nineveh, to whom he had referred; — they

would appear on the day of judgment, together with the people to whom he was speaking, and their conduct would give testimony against the Jews, and make it clear that they deserved to be condemned: because the Ninevites repented and turned from their evil ways, when they had heard what Jonah preached to them (Jonah iii): but though Jesus was greater than Jonah, the Jews had heard *him* and yet had not repented.

Jesus proceeded to shew (for the benefit of such as were able to understand him) that the fault, which occasioned their asking for more signs, lay not with him, but with the Jews themselves. For this purpose he applied some arguments, which he had before used upon several occasions. (Matt. v. 15; vi. 22, 23. Luke viii. 16.) When a person lights a candle, he does not put it out of the way into some shut up corner of the house, nor under a bushel basket; but puts it in a candlestick in the room, so that whoever comes into the room may be able to see. The reason and conscience which God gives to every man ought to enable them to understand and apply the miracles and teaching of Jesus; but the Jews hid the light of reason and conscience, smothering it as it were by prejudices, and putting it aside by self-willed opposition to truth. A candle is of no use unless a man has eyes which are able to see the light: the means by which light is applied, so as to guide us in the right use of our limbs, is the eye. If a man be clear-sighted, he can manage all the actions of his body in a proper manner, as one walking in the full light of day: but if a man has a bad eye, diseased or imperfect, he is not able to see things as they really are, or in their

proper places ; and the consequence is, that he walks about like a man groping in the darkness of night. Jesus bid the people take care lest the very means which were given them for the purpose of profiting by their light, should turn that light into darkness. By this comparison he taught them, that the reason why they did not receive the light of His truth into their minds, was their own self-willed prejudice ; which rendered their understandings incapable of being convinced of truth, just as a diseased eye makes a man unable to see things aright, however clear the light may be. It depended therefore upon their own state of mind, whether they would, or would not, be convinced even by the plainest evidence. If their sight was in every respect clear, and able to perceive whatever was before them, —that is, if the whole understanding was unprejudiced, and no hidden self-will darkened it,—then, as every object would be rightly seen by the eye, so Christ's authority and power would be plainly perceived and acknowledged, from what they had already known, just as the things around us are seen when the bright flame of a candle shines upon them.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. It is very natural to consider those connected with persons who are evidently in the favour of God, as particularly blessed ; and especially to feel that a blessing rests upon the parents of such, and those who have helped them in their course. This was the feeling of the woman who, upon hearing Jesus, thought immediately upon

the happiness of his mother. It is true, that the favour of God wonderfully extends itself *around* those who are the principal objects of it; and that it must be a source of happiness to be the parent, or in any way the helper, of those who are active in the service of God: but this cause of rejoicing may, or may not, be a means of grace to our own souls. It may indeed be the occasion of helping us in our christian course; or it may be the occasion of puffing us up with a false pride, not even founded upon our own good character, but upon that of another. The only true and solid blessing is the providential mercy by which we are brought within the hearing of the Gospel, and the possession of the grace of God ourselves, in such a degree as enables us to overcome all the hindrances, which would prevent us from living according to that gospel which we hear.

QUESTIONS.

Do I secretly take honour to myself, from my connexion with any one who is respected for a religious character?

Do I shew any symptom of such a feeling, by wishing to be so connected with some one whom I myself greatly respect?

Or do I seek the grace of God myself, to enable me to live according to his word, as being the true way to obtain blessing and honour?

2, & 3. The Applications No. 1, & 2, of the sixty second Portion, which relates the previous occasions upon which our Lord answered those who demanded a sign of him, will be equally suitable here. See vol. ii. pages 175, 176.

4. In this portion, we have an instance of the way in which our Lord makes repeated use of arguments and comparisons, which he had before employed, to different purposes. He brings together statements which he had made almost

word for word, under different circumstances ; he combines and applies them, in order to shew that the clearest evidence of the truth of the Gospel will not convince the mind, as long as it is perverted by a self-willed prejudice. This is the true reason, why the preaching of the Gospel to this day produces such different effects upon different people. The truth stands forth as clear as light, and some minds are full of light to receive it with simple-heartedness and simplicity ;—to such it is plain and convincing. Other minds have *some part dark* ; or else the mind is evil—beset by prejudice—confused by hidden motives. Persons in this state of mind cannot discern and distinguish truth from error ; and instead of charging the fault where it really is due—on themselves—they throw the blame on the doctrines of God's word, and resist the truth. There cannot be a more dangerous condition than this ; because, however powerful the Gospel, or however forcibly it may be preached, the perverted mind turns it to its own evil. If the light which is in us be darkness, “how great is that darkness.” (Matt. vi. 23.)

QUESTIONS.

How do I examine the doctrine which I hear preached as the Gospel ?

Do I compare it with my previous thoughts, in order to make it agree with them ?

Have I fixed notions of my own as to what true religion is ? and am I disposed to reject whatever is contrary to those notions ?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may have grace to keep the Word of God which you hear, and that you may find your real happiness in so doing.

2. Pray for an humble mind, so as to be satisfied with what the Scriptures tell you concerning the salvation of Jesus Christ ; without wanting more proof of the truth of heavenly things, before you will believe them.

3. Pray to be deeply impressed with the account which must be rendered for the religious instructions you receive ; and so to profit by your opportunities, that no one may rise up in judgment against you.

4. Pray that you may be preserved from all self-will and prejudice with respect to the doctrines of the Gospel ; so that you may be able to exercise a wise and simple judgment with respect to what you hear.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Grant I beseech thee, Almighty God, that the word of thy truth, which I am permitted to hear with my outward ears, may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in my heart, that it may bring forth the fruit of godly living, to the honour and praise of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (2) Lord of all power and might, who hast been pleased to give so many proofs of the truth of thy Gospel, and who hast especially declared it by thy resurrection from the dead, give me I pray thee an humble mind ; that, without seeking to follow my own wisdom, I may be satisfied with what Thou hast caused to be written for my learning. Give me faith to believe them without waiting for further signs of their truth. (3) Keep me ever under a deep impression of that solemn account which I must one day give, for all the opportunities of knowing Thee which have been brought within my reach ; and enable me so to profit by them all, that no one who has had fewer advantages may rise up in the judgment against me. (4) Preserve me, O Lord, from every false view of truth ; from all self-will respecting my own opinions ; and from all prejudice against what thou hast written for our learning : and enable me with a single eye to exercise a sound mind and a faith in receiving thy holy word. *Amen.*

ONE HUNDRED & THIRTIETH PORTION.

Jesus reproves the Pharisees and Lawyers.—*Discourse No. 16.*

PLACE. *Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xi. ver. 37 to 54.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xi. verse

39. ravening *means here* desire to devour and plunder

47, &c. sepulchres . . . tombs

53. urge him attack him with words

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

While Jesus was delivering the discourse explained in the last portion, one of the Pharisees who happened to be present invited him to dinner (Luke vii. 36.) Our Lord accompanied the Pharisee home, and proceeded at once to place himself at the table without pouring water over his hands. (Matt. xv. 1, 2; vol. iii, page 120.) The Pharisee observed this omission; and was very much astonished that Jesus should have neglected a custom handed down from the elders, and generally considered so important a religious ceremony. Though nothing was said, yet Jesus knew

what was passing in his mind (Matt. ix. 3, 4. John ii. 24, 25), and addressed him with reference to the subject of these thoughts. The Pharisees (he said) acted like persons who wished to have the appearance of cleanliness, by washing only the outside of the vessels they made use of in their meals: just so the Pharisees assumed the character of religious cleanness and purity, by paying great attention to outward forms and washings; whilst all the time their hearts were set upon unjust gain, and all kinds of evil. Foolish they were not to consider that the same God, who made things which are seen, is also the Maker of man's soul and spirit; and therefore, before Him, it is as needful for the thoughts to be pure as the outward acts. It would be wiser for them to cleanse out the covetousness of their hearts, and to bring forth the fruits of such inward cleansing by giving liberally to the poor according to their means; and then, in thus cleansing the source and principle of their actions, all things, including the outward matters of conduct, such as are seen of men, would become really clean.

Our Lord followed up this reproof of the Pharisees, by exposing to them the real foulness and sinfulness of their general conduct. He denounced a woe upon them, for their hypocrisy in making a great shew of obedience to God's law in trifling matters, while they entirely neglected the great and essential things required by the same law. For instance, what was the way in which they acted respecting tithes? God's law required, that the tenth part of what the earth produced every year, should be given to the Levites, as the Ministers of religion. (Lev. xxvii. 30. Num. xviii. 21.

Deut. xiv. 22. Neh. xiii. 5.) The tithes of corn, of wine, of oil, and of some other things, were particularly mentioned in the law ; but the produce of more trifling things was not named. The Pharisees however made a point of giving the tithes of the smallest herbs in their gardens (such 'as mint and rue, which were of very little value indeed,) that they might make a shew of being very exact in their obedience to the law of God ; while at the same time they paid no attention to those important commandments, which required them to be just in their dealings, and to set their affections upon God : whereas they should have taken care in the first place to be obedient to these important points, without neglecting any of the smaller matters in their proper place.

Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees other ways in which their hearts were corrupt, notwithstanding their outward washings. He said that woe would come upon them, because through pride they were fond of taking the places of distinction in the Synagogues, and of being met with salutations of honour in the markets, or public assemblies. Their hypocrisy made them just like places where dead bodies were buried, but so covered up, that people passing by were likely to step upon them without knowing it. To understand the meaning of this, it must be remembered that (by the law of Moses) whoever happened to touch a dead body, or even the place where one was laid, (Numb. xix. 16) was considered to be *unclean*, in that sense which has been already explained (vol. i., page 62) : and therefore for a man to tread upon a grave unawares would unfit him for the service of God, until he had been purified by a sacrifice. Thus the Pha-

risees seemed to be religious and holy ; so that people might be deceived by their outward profession, and might be led by them into sin unawares.

One person present in the company was a teacher of the Law, who was vexed that Jesus, in calling the Pharisees hypocrites, had included the Scribes whose occupation was the same as the Lawyers. This man interrupted our Lord, and reminded him that by what he had said he not only reprov'd the Pharisees and the Scribes, but that his reproof would seem to apply even to the teachers of the Law. Perhaps the man hoped, and meant to imply that this surely could never have been intended. But if such were his thought, Jesus shewed him that he was mistaken ; by immediately addressing to them also the same sharp rebuke. He said that woe would come also upon the teachers of the law ; because in their instructions they stated the things required of their disciples to be so many, and so burdensome, that it made religion to be like a heavy weight, which men could hardly carry ; and all the while the lawyers, who imposed these burthens upon the conscience, never troubled themselves in the least degree to do what they required of others. He told them that misery would come upon them : and he put them in mind that they built monuments in remembrance of the prophets of former times, and it was their forefathers who had put those very prophets to death, for delivering the same message from God which He was now come to bring. (Heb. xi. 37, 38.) Hereby they in fact acknowledged, not only that their forefathers were the persons who committed these murders, but also that they themselves were of the same mind

and disposition with them. [The Greek word, which is translated in our Bible "ye allow," really means quite as much as *are of the same mind and disposition*: the same word is used in much the same manner in Rom. i. 32; where the persons spoken of "not only do the same (wicked things) but *have pleasure in* them that do them." And in this verse the word is further explained in the margin, as meaning "*consent with* them."]]

After declaring these three terrible "Woes" against these persons, our Lord solemnly addressed them in his high character as "the wisdom of God." (Prov. viii. 1 Cor. i. 24, 30. Col. ii. 3.) [We may know that, by the words "therefore also said the Wisdom of God" he meant Himself; because when He afterwards repeated the same declaration he said exactly the same things in his own name (Matt. xxiii. 34.)] He told them that, since they had hearts no less hard and rebellious than their fathers before them, their treatment of the prophets and ministers of the Gospel, sent amongst them by Christ, would be no less hardened and violent: that is, they would oppose and resist them, doing them all the harm they could, even to taking away their lives. (Acts vii. 51, 52; xii. 1—4.) Thus would the evil hearts of the men then living be made manifest, by committing the same sins against God as their fathers had done; and thus would they be included in God's righteous judgments upon the resistance made against His servants. All these murders indeed would be visited upon the men of that generation; because by shedding the blood of Him, who was the son of God made man, they heaped upon themselves all the guilt of those who had before shed

the blood of the servants whom he had sent to prepare them for his coming. (Matt. xxi. 33—41.) Thus a fearful account of blood would be required of that generation; even the blood of all the righteous servants of God who had been murdered for their faithfulness to Him, from the beginning of the world; beginning with Abel, who was killed by Cain because his faithful worship testified against the offering of Cain. (Gen. iv. 1—8. 1 John iii. 12.) And as our Lord particularized the first person who was killed for religion's sake, so was he pleased to mention the name of the person who should be the last in the list; though the murder itself would not actually take place, until 37 years after the time he thus prophesied it. He said that generation should answer for the blood of all the prophets who had been killed, "from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar and the temple."

Upon reading this, we naturally enquire who this Zacharias was; especially as we afterwards find our Lord repeating this statement, and then describing him more particularly as "the son of Barachias." (Matt. xxiii. 35.) Upon searching the Old Testament we find one person named Zechariah or Zacharias, who was stoned to death "in the court of the House of the Lord" (2 Chron. xxiv. 20—22): but he was not the person Jesus alluded to, because he was not the son of Barachias, but of Jehoiada. And besides the death of this person 880 years before would not suit with our Lord's meaning; he intended to mention the *last* person killed, as Abel was the *first*: whereas many of God's servants had been unjustly killed after the death of *this* Zechariah. We also read of

Zechariah the Prophet, who was indeed the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo (Zech. i. 1. Ezra v. 1) ; but no mention is made of his death in any way, and there is no reason to suppose that he came to a violent end : besides which he lived 530 years before our Lord's time ; and there is therefore the same objection to prevent our supposing that (even if he had been murdered) his death could have been the *last*, as distinguished from Abel's, the *first* death of a righteous man for the cause of God.

It so happens however that a Jewish writer, named Josephus, (who was present at the destruction of Jerusalem about forty years after our Lord's death, and wrote a history of the war), gives an account of the violent death of a person named Zacharias, the son of Baruch : who being an innocent man, but hated by the wicked Jews for opposing their wickedness, was brought to trial ; when the judges declared him not to be guilty of any crime, the people fell upon him in the midst of the temple, and stabbed him to death. This is the last detailed account given of any such violent outrage by the Jews, against a righteous person for righteousness' sake, before their city was destroyed by the Romans, and they themselves reduced to the state in which they remain to this day. It seems most possible therefore that our Lord spoke in prophecy of this murder, both here and afterwards in Matt. xxiii. 35 : nor is it a sufficient objection to this, that he said Zacharias *perished*, as if the death had already taken place ; for the inspired prophets very commonly speak of things, which were to happen long after, in the same language as if they had already happened. As righteous Abel's death was the *first* of the kind,

so the death of this Zacharias, the son of Baruch, was the *last* of the same kind, the guilt of which would be charged upon the Jews as a nation.

There was still one more reproach, which our Lord cast upon the lawyers. He denounced a judgment against them because, by their false explanation of the Scriptures, they hindered the people from learning the truth from them, just as completely as if they had locked it up in a room, and taken away the key, so that nobody could get at the knowledge of the truth. The lawyers would not receive into their own hearts this divine knowledge; and they also prevented from receiving it sincere persons, who really wished to be taught: so that they (as it were) would neither go into the room, where they kept the truth locked up, nor would they allow any one else to go in.

Upon our Lord's speaking so boldly and strongly to the Scribes and Pharisees, they were much enraged, and began to set upon him on all sides with many provoking words; trying to make him if possible say something which might give them a handle to bring a charge against him before the Roman magistrates.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture, See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The first application of the ninetieth portion is equally suitable to this, in which a similar circumstance is recorded. See vol. iii, page 124.

2. In this severe reproof, which our Lord gave to the Pharisees, Scribes, and Lawyers, he shews us the exceeding foolishness of hypocrisy, and double mindedness; with especial referenee to the knowledge which God has of all things, not

only of the outward appearances which men put on in order to seem to be good, but of the inward thoughts and motives of the heart, which are hidden from those around us. (Matt. vi. 1—4, and see vol. i. page 289.) “He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge shall he not know?” (Psalm xciv. 9, 10.) Nothing can be hidden from God, and the same God orders all things; so that to act as if a decent outward conduct were enough, while the heart indulges itself in evil, is the most foolish kind of hypocrisy. Such a making clean of the outside, while the inside remains foul, is frequently shewn by a strict attention to the smaller and less troublesome duties connected with religion; while those which are really important and require watchfulness and self-denial, are altogether neglected. Such was the case with the Pharisees, who would boast that they never failed to send the tenth part of every handful of herbs gathered from their gardens, because it was due to the Priest by the law of God; while at the same time they took no pains to govern their lives by those two great Commandments of the law—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;” “and thy neighbour as thyself.” (Matt. xxii. 36—40.) While however the hypocrite satisfies himself with attending to such trifling outward forms of obedience to God’s law, he is usually very strict in expecting and requiring that other people should obey in every point; and he makes no allowance for shortcomings and infirmities. This was shewn in the case of the Lawyers; whom our Lord charged with laying heavy burthens on other men, which they would not bear in any degree themselves. Christ’s exposure of these several points of character should

lead us to diligent self-examination, lest the root of any such evils should remain secretly unchecked within us. (Heb. xii. 15.)

QUESTIONS.

While I am receiving praise from men, do I remember that God is well acquainted with all the secret motives that led me to the outward action for which I am thus approved ?

Do I sincerely endeavour to purify my motives, as the sure way of making my conduct pure also ?

Am I particular about small matters of duty, and at the same time neglectful of those which are more important ?

Do I judge of the conduct of others more strictly than of my own ?

3. The doctrine taught by our Lord, concerning the Jews who crucified him and rejected his Apostles, should lead us to very serious consideration. He declares that they will be considered guilty of the blood of all the righteous servants of God, who had been killed before that time : and the reasons which justify this doctrine are, if possible, still more applicable to those persons of the present generation who do not receive the Gospel ; and who, by rejecting it and living in rebellion against Christ, may be said to crucify him afresh. Such persons may perhaps exclaim against the persecutions of the early Christians by both the Jews and the Romans : and yet, by refusing to receive the doctrines of true Christianity, they plainly shew that they are of one mind with all those former persecutors ; and if they had lived in the same days, they would undoubtedly have joined in all those cruelties against believers in Christ. The single act therefore of refusing and opposing the Gospel now brings a man under the very same condemnation, as is due to those who at first carried their opposition even to the crucifying of Christ. Not only by neglecting the Gospel-salvation do men lose its benefits, but they are in fact guilty of the

blood of those who have suffered for Christ's sake : because the opposition to God's truth in their heart is in reality the same, as it was in the hearts of the murderers of St. Stephen, and St. James, and of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

QUESTIONS.

Is my spirit in any respect the same with those who opposed the Gospel in former times, however I may disapprove of parts of their conduct ?

How can I be sure that if I were in similar circumstances to former opposers of religion, I should not act in the same way ?

VII HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray to be preserved from hypocrisy, and to be guided by godly simplicity.

2. Pray to be kept from any secret spirit of opposition to the truth ; that so the guilt of open persecutors may never be charged upon you.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit ; that I may not be satisfied with an outward appearance of obedience to thy word, but that my inward motives may be clean in thy sight. Save me from all deceit and double-mindedness. Make me to have respect unto all thy commandments, the greatest as well as the least. Teach me to be humble in myself, and charitable towards others ; and let my whole conduct and desires manifest the power of true Christian simplicity. (2) Let me not be betrayed into any agreement of heart with those who resist the power of thy truth ; but grant that in sincerity of faith I may ever follow the steps of those who follow Thee : so that the condemnation of those who have shed the blood of thy servants may never fall upon me. Hear me, Merciful Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. AMEN. Our Father, &c.

The disciples warned against hypocrisy &c.—*Discourse, No. 17.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xii. ver. 1 to 12.

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

1. an innumerable } *means here* { tens of thou-
multitnde } sands

When our Lord left the Pharisee's house where he had been dining, he found that an immense crowd had collected; who pressed so closely together, that they could not stand without treading one upon another. Upon seeing this multitude Jesus delivered a discourse; addressing himself in the first place to his disciples, and beginning with a subject suggested by the reproof which he had just given in the house of the Pharisee. He bid them take heed to themselves, lest they should

be influenced by "the leaven of the Pharisees," which he described as being "hypocrisy." He had before described the "doctrine" of the Pharisees as their leaven : thus comparing their teaching to that which is used to make bread light ; and which, when put into a quantity of flour, soon extends itself to every part of it. (Matt. xvi. 6, 12 ; vol. iii, page 174.) Here he describes the leaven of the doctrine as being hypocrisy ; alluding to the false motive which influenced all they said and did—the desire of making a fair outward shew before men. (Luke xi. 39—42.) The Pharisees did not directly teach the people to be hypocrites ; but, in teaching what they professed to be true doctrine, they taught it hypocritically and falsely : therefore this caution addressed in particular to the disciples, and not generally to the people, must be understood as intended to warn the ministers of Christ against teaching the opinions and commands of men, falsely pretending that they have the authority of the word of God, and all persons against making a hypocritical profession of doctrine. He shewed the foolishness of such conduct, reminding them of what he had told the twelve disciples, when he first sent them out to preach in his name (Matt. x. 1—3, 26—33), all that has been said or done privately shall hereafter be exposed publicly ; and every thing that has been hidden and kept secret shall be laid open and become known. And he now applied this argument to enforce the necessity of faithfulness and sincerity. He had before said, that what he told them in private they were to declare publicly, and what he had spoken to them in

particular they were to preach in a manner most likely to attract general attention (vol. iii, page 21) : and now he warns them against, in any degree, dissembling or falsifying their doctrines, by telling them that whatever they might teach which would not bear the light, shall hereafter be declared in the fulness of light ; and what they might speak secretly (and, as it were, in a corner) shall be published in the hearing of all, as in the places where people commonly assemble together, such as the flat roof of a house, which was a usual place for walking.

One reason why men are induced to teach what they know to be wrong, so as to become hypocrites like the Pharisees, is that they are afraid of wicked men who hate the truth : our Lord therefore followed up his warning, by repeating the encouragement he had given them upon the former occasion. (Matt. x. 28—31.) Calling them his friends, and thereby putting them in mind that He was their friend, he bid them not to be afraid of any who would desire to hurt them :—even supposing that they did their very worst, they could only put them to death, but could not extend their anger beyond the grave. The only reasonable fear is the fear of offending God, whose power extends over both body and soul ; so that after he has separated the soul from the body, by death, he can (if he pleases) cast both the body and soul of those who offend Him into eternal perdition—the second death :—He it is, whom we ought really to fear.

Another reason why Christians should not be influenced by the fear of man, arises from the

particular care which God takes of those who are true to him. He governs and directs every thing that happens, so that the most trifling thing cannot be done without Him: for instance, five sparrows might be bought for two of the smallest pieces of money then in use; yet nothing occurs to those little birds without the permission of God. Nothing can hurt God's people, in the slightest degree, without His consent; nothing (according to the common expression) can touch a hair of their head, without his taking account of it. There can be no occasion then for them to fear any thing that man can do to hurt them; since it is plain that they are more precious in the sight of God than a great many of these little birds, each of which is nevertheless remembered by Him.

Still further to encourage his disciples to remain faithful, in spite of the fear of men, Jesus again declared, that they who are not afraid of shewing publicly that they believe in him, are the persons whom he, as the Son of man, will publicly acknowledge hereafter, in the presence of the angels: whilst on the contrary those persons, who through fear, or any other feeling, are induced to disown Christ before men, will be disowned by him hereafter in the presence of the angels.

Having thus mentioned the sin of hypocritically denying Him, contrary to conviction, he implies that such a denial is a grievous offence against the Holy Spirit; referring to the important remark he had made when the Pharisees had charged him with casting out devils by Beel-

zebulon the prince of the Devils. (Matt. xii. 22—32.) A person may have ignorantly spoken against Christ the Son of Man, and still be within the reach of that forgiveness which He died to procure for men. But evil speaking, or resistance against God the Holy Ghost, hardens the heart and prevents it from using the only means by which forgiveness can ever be obtained. (See vol. ii, page 162.)

As a still further encouragement to persevere in truth and faithfulness, in spite of all the opposition and persecution of men, our Lord informed the disciples that when they should be taken up and brought to trial (both by the authorities of the Church in the Synagogue, and also by the magistrates and rulers in the civil courts) they were not at such times to be alarmed or anxious how they should defend themselves, or what they should say; for they should be taught by the Holy Ghost at the proper time, what it would be right to speak. (Matt. x. 19.)

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. In the last portion we find our Lord giving a severe reproof to the Pharisees, the Scribes, and the Lawyers, for their hypocrisy and double-mindedness; and shewing the foolishness of such a course, because of the knowledge which God has of all things, and of all thoughts. In the present portion, we find Him giving a warning against this same sin of hypocrisy; but shewing its foolishness for another reason,

one which has especial reference, not to the present knowledge which God has of the secrets of the heart, but to the future knowledge which all men shall have of the false motives by which the hypocrites were influenced. It would be very short-sighted for any man to deceive his neighbour, if he knew that at the end of a month, or a week, or a day, his deceit would be exposed : and though it may be a little longer before the day comes, on which all hypocrites shall be exposed before those whom they have deceived, yet come it assuredly will ; and that with greater certainty than any exposure of deceit upon earth. A hypocrite who perfectly succeeds in the deceit he has practised upon man, is only storing up for himself a greater degree of shame, when that which has been covered shall be revealed, and that which has been hid shall be known.

A public profession of religion in the Church is an important thing : by declaring our belief of the doctrines professed, we lift them up, as it were, for the instruction of others ; and it is needful that, in making it, we take heed and beware of hypocrisy. The day will come, when all who have assembled in the same congregation with us, and heard us repeat the Creed, will see whether the words " I believe in God &c," were indeed the expression of our sincere feeling, or whether they only covered the hidden unbelief of an ungodly and a worldly heart.

QUESTIONS.

Do I perceive the folly of trying to conceal any thing from the observation of my neighbours, seeing that they must all come to know every thing about it on the great day ?

Does my profession as a christian spring from conviction of heart? Or, do I merely say the words required of me by the Church, in order to maintain a respectable character?

2. Application No. 2 of the ninety-sixth portion should be read here. See vol. iii, page 177.

3. Application No. 3, of the sixty-first portion should also be read here, see vol. ii, page 167.

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may put away every thing which draws you from truth into hypocrisy.

2. Pray for grace to be able to make your outward profession of religion according to the sincerity of your convictions.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification, grant that I may so put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that I may always serve thee in pureness of living and truth, through the merits of the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (2) Grant that in all honesty and godly sincerity I may declare thy truth with my mouth, and believe it effectually in my heart; so that I may shew forth thy praise, not only with my lips but in my life, to the glory of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND PORTION.

The Rich man's folly.—*Parable No. 11.—Discourse No. 18.*

PLACE. *Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xii. ver. 13 to 34.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xii. verse

13. inheritance *means here* property coming from my father

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Our Lord's discourse to his disciples, was interrupted by a person from amongst the crowd, who brought a complaint against his brother. It appears that for some reason or other the one brother objected to make the proper settlement of the property, which ought to have been divided between them at the father's death ; and the other brother now appealed to Jesus to settle the dispute. Our Lord however, who never interfered about matters belonging to the civil magistrates (Matt. xxii. 15—22), asked the complainant, ' Why do you apply to me ? has any one appointed me to act as a judge, or to decide in such matters ? ' He accordingly refused to interfere.

He then took the occasion to warn the people against being covetous, or craving to have more than is necessary or right; and told them, that when a person had an abundance of all things, his life was not one of the things which he could count upon as his possession. To shew more plainly what he meant, he delivered a parable. He said that there was a rich man, who had a good estate in land. One year there was the prospect of a very abundant harvest; and the owner was puzzled, how he should manage to store away all his expected crops. At last he determined that he would pull down all his present graneries (because they were too small), and build up others large enough to contain the corn and other things he expected. And then he thought that he might comfort himself, with the certainty of possessing a supply of whatever he could want for a great number of years; so that he might be quite satisfied, and indulge himself in eating and drinking and merry-making as much as he liked. But in the midst of all this security and covetous self-enjoyment, God spoke to him,—calling him a fool, because he counted upon his life as if that too had been his own property;—whereas that very night God would call his soul back again, having been the giver of it in the beginning; and then who would become the owner of all the things, which he so confidently called his own? To this parable Jesus added an application—just as foolish as this man are all those, who store up the good things of this world for their enjoyment, but do not seek after what makes them rich in the sight of God.

After delivering this parable, our Lord turned

from the crowd to his disciples, and made a direct application of the doctrine contained in the parable; using the same language, almost word for word, which he had used in the Sermon on the Mount nearly three years before, when shewing that no man can serve two masters. (Matt. vi. 25—33.) As the words are so nearly the same in both places, the explanation is not repeated here; it may be found in the thirty-eighth portion, see vol. i, pages 326 & 327.

Upon repeating the words “but rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you” (ver. 31.), our Lord was pleased now to add an assurance especially addressed to the disciples; as being the “flock,” of which he had already described himself as “the good Shepherd” (John x. 1—16), and as the “little” flock, because so few belong to it compared with the many that are not Christ’s sheep. (John x. 26. Matt. vii. 14.) He bid them not to give way to fear; because they may be assured that it is the good pleasure of their heavenly Father to give them that kingdom which they so faithfully seek; so that they shall be carried on safely under the rule of God’s grace in this life, and shall rest eternally in the dominion of God’s glory hereafter. Relying on this assurance, the true Christian need not think of storing up goods for future time; but may dispose of what other men would lay by, in order that he may be able to give to those who are in want of present necessities. Thus the Christian will be providing against future want that which will not decay and be destroyed; he will be laying by a treasure in the safest keeping, under the care of God himself, which will never

fail—no thief can take it away—no insect can spoil it. Most important is it, that we should know how to rate earthly and heavenly things at their proper value ; because, wherever we have stored up those things that we feel are most to be desired, there will our thoughts and affections be assuredly fixed. If we value earthly enjoyments most, then our affections will not rise up to heaven, but we shall be loving and thinking about worldly things : but if we most value spiritual and heavenly enjoyments, then our hearts will be fixed there where true joys are to be found ; and we shall be thinking and speaking of those things which are for the glory of God. (Matt. vi. 19—21. See vol. i, page 324.)

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture : see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The complaint made by the man in the crowd against his brother, and the request which he made to Jesus, was an *honest* attempt to induce our Lord to do what the Pharisees so often *dishonestly* endeavoured to ensnare him into. This man applied to Christ, because he really desired him to interfere in his favour ; the Pharisees applied to Him about worldly concerns, because they wanted him to take upon himself some authority, for which they might accuse him to the Roman Governor. But in both cases the wisdom of Jesus plainly appeared ; and while he refused to interfere with the office of the magistrate, he turned the request into an occasion of spiritual good to the person who made it, by warning him against the evil principle which lay at the root of the complaint. Our Lord's example in this

matter should be followed by all his disciples ; they may see from it the wisdom of " not entangling themselves with the affairs of this life" (2 Tim. ii. 4), into which worldly minded men would desire to see them, that they may be drawn away from the better things of the life to come.

QUESTIONS.

Am I careful not to mix myself up with such worldly transactions, as are likely to draw me away from the exercise of spiritual life ?

2. There is no sin more general than that which turns a prudent management of worldly affairs into an unbelieving carefulness for future wants. This is the principle of covetousness ; and the first indulgence of a desire for more than is needful grows very rapidly into that love of money which is " the root of all evil." (1 Tim. vi. 10.) Storing up of goods for future enjoyment, instead of enjoying the present happiness of " dispersing them abroad and giving to the poor" (Psalm cxii. 9. 2 Cor. ix. 9), is an act of the greatest folly, because whatever else a man may make sure of for time to come, he cannot make sure of his earthly life : and when his soul has left this world, all his securing of goods for himself turns out to be only storing them up for others. He therefore is truly guilty of folly, who lays by treasure, but takes no pains to secure the benefit which will alone be enjoyed beyond the grave.

QUESTIONS.

How do I employ the excess of my present wants ? Do I lay it by, in order to enjoy myself in future years ?

How often do I think of the uncertainty of life ? and what influence has that thought upon the arrangements I make of my worldly concerns ?

3. Application No. 3 of the thirty-ninth portion should be read with this. (See vol. i, p. 330.)

4. It is very merciful in our Lord, to add so precious an assurance as that, by which he calms the natural fears of his "little flock." This passage contains so distinct a promise, both of the grace of God leading on to the enjoyment of future glory, and also of a sufficient supply of all things necessary for our temporal wants; (both these blessings being connected with the godly seeking of that kingdom, which it is God's good pleasure to give); that it may be considered as the special promise referred to by the Apostle, when he says that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) This blessed assurance, when faithfully received into the heart, (which thereby feels a full dependence upon God for the supply of all things, spiritual and temporal) promotes an enlarged liberality, and leads the Christian freely to bestow what he has for the benefit of those who are in need; instead of hoarding up our abundance as a security against future necessities. Hereby we manifest that spirit of love; the possession of which is the true security that we do indeed belong to that little flock, for whom the Good Shepherd laid down his life, and for whom is reserved "the inheritance of the saints in light."

QUESTIONS.

Do I humbly take to myself the assurance, that it is the good will of my Heavenly Father to give me the kingdom? If not, why not?

If I do, am I endeavouring to secure worldly advantages for future years by accumulating property? Or am I making the most of my present advantages, by exercising a liberal spirit of charity to the full extent of my power?

What fixed portion of my yearly income do I give away for the benefit of others ?

5. The Application No. 1, of the thirty-eighth portion, may be read here. See vol. i, page 328.

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for wisdom to avoid all such worldly affairs as may choke the progress of spiritual life in you.

2. Pray that you may be preserved from the sin of hoarding that which God has given you to use to his glory.

3. Ask to be blessed with so faithful a dependence upon God's promises, and so comfortable an assurance that He who has begun a good work in you will continue it unto the end, that you may exercise a liberal spirit of charity.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Gracious God, giver of all spiritual grace, bestow upon me, I beseech thee, that wisdom by which I may be directed to walk in the midst of this world ; and may avoid all those overwhelming cares and business of life, which draw the mind from the things of eternity, and deaden the spiritual life. (2) Teach me to use this world as not abusing it ; shew me how to employ all the abundance, with which I am blessed, for thy glory : enable me to see the foolishness of storing up goods for future days, when I know not what a day may bring forth. (3) Give me so entire a trust in thy promises that, relying upon thy good pleasure to give me the kingdom, I may seek it with my whole heart, and may prepare for it by the constant exercise of a large spirit of love ; imparting to others day by day that which thou art pleased to bestow upon me daily. May my affections be daily more set upon things above, not on things on the earth ; that, when Christ who is my life shall appear, I may also appear with him in glory. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THIRD PORTION.

The waiting servants.—*Parable No. 12.*

PLACE. *Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xii. ver. 35 to 48.

III. THE MEANINGS;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xii. verse

35. girded about *means here* bound round with a strap or band

39. the goodman..... the master

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Our Lord continued the discourse, of which we have heard the first part in the last portion. He went on to apply what he had said, by delivering a Parable on the duty of constantly watching for the day of his coming again. His disciples ought always to be in the condition of servants waiting for their master, who had left them for a season. In the country where Jesus lived people used to wear long loose dresses; which hung about their persons while they were not at work, but when at work would have hindered them from being active; and therefore they used (when employed about any thing) to draw their clothes tight round them, by means of a girdle or strap fastened round the

waist. Jesus therefore by telling his disciples to be thus "girded about," meant that they should always stand ready for work. And as persons who are watching at night-time take care to have a light, he meant that they should be always watchful when he told them to have their "lights burning," in order that they might be like servants expecting the return of their master from a marriage-feast; so that at the first notice of his approach, by knocking at the door, they might be ready to let him in without any delay.

Jesus enforced this comparison upon his disciples, by telling them that those among his servants, whom he (as their Lord) finds in this watchful state at his second coming, shall be especially honoured and blessed;—they shall stand in their master's place, and share in his privileges. (Luke xxii. 30.) This he declared by stating that the Master would do for such servants what it was their part to do for him—that he would make them sit down to partake of the feast, binding up his own dress like a servant in order to wait upon them.

Jesus shewed the necessity of this Christian watchfulness, by warning them of the uncertainty as to the particular time when he would return to the earth, and of the certainty that he would come at some time or other. The twelve hours of the night were divided into portions of three hours each, called watches:—our Lord compared the time of his absence from this world, when he went up into heaven, to the night season; and said that, whether he should return at an earlier period—such as the second watch in the night, or at a later period—such as the third watch in the night, whoever was found in such a state of watchful

readiness should receive the promised blessing. Supposing a person were to be informed that a thief meant to rob his house at a particular hour in the night, in that case he would certainly take care to be upon his guard at that hour, in order to prevent his house from being broken open. But Christians must be on the watch at *all* hours ; for we are not told at what particular time Jesus will come :—it will be when he is least expected. (1 Thess. v. 1—6.)

This parable was addressed to the whole number of “disciples.” (Luke xii. 1.) Upon hearing it, Peter asked Jesus, whether he meant it for the instruction of the ordained Apostles alone, or of all the disciples generally. Instead of giving a direct answer to the question, Jesus made it the occasion of addressing to his ministers a more particular warning, that they must be always found diligent in the duty committed to them. In the parable he had called the disciples the Lord’s *servants* ; and now he asked what was the character of a wise and faithful *steward*, placed by the master over the other servants, for the purpose of supplying them with necessary food in the proper season. Such a head-servant should receive an especial blessing, who (whenever the master might come) should be found diligent in this duty : Jesus solemnly assures us, that he will give to such servants the privilege of sharing with him all that he possesses. But if a servant appointed to such a place of honour should abuse his power, thinking that the coming of the Lord is not nigh at hand,—should neglect his duty—treat the servants placed under his care improperly and tyrannically, and follow the ways of those who indulge themselves

to excess :—then the master of that steward—the Lord of that minister—will come unexpectedly upon him ; he will be taken unawares, and, being cut off in the midst of his sins, will receive his just sentence of condemnation, together with those who are unbelievers.

Jesus then pointed out a particular distinction which will be made, in that sentence of condemnation to which he had just referred. He said that a servant who was acquainted with what his master requires of him, and who yet (instead of preparing for the Lord's return, by diligently striving to do his will) on the contrary neglects what he knows he ought to do, shall be punished with severity, though his sins be but sins of omission—shall be "beaten with many stripes." While, on the other hand, a servant who is really ignorant of the duty required of him, though his sins be sins of commission, shall meet with a punishment less severe—he shall be beaten with few stripes: so great is the responsibility of knowledge. To know God's will is a great gift; and from him to whom this gift is given much fruit will be expected: just as it is in the affairs of men;—when people have entrusted any one with a great deal, they will naturally expect from him the full benefit of their confidence.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. This is the first time that our Lord applied the important subject of his coming again, with a distinct warning to prepare for it. We have already seen how he conducted his instruction upon this subject; he referred to it occasionally, in a less

plain manner, until the Apostles had become convinced that he was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. xvi. 16, 27); and then he was pleased to explain something of the glory of his future coming. (Vol. iii., page 203.) Having thus made a distinct statement on this point, he alludes to it in order to excite his disciples to a spirit of constant watchfulness. From this time forward we find it to be the motive which is continually urged throughout the New Testament for the same object; and it is one especially fitted to produce this effect. The result of every person's life upon earth will be settled when the Lord Jesus shall come again; whether any one has been taken out of this world before his coming, or has lived until that day, and so be one of *the quick*. A Christian's hope is, that he is to partake of the blessing and glory, which are prepared for those that love God (1 Cor. ii. 9.) And these are so great (as the parable in this portion teaches us), that if we are really expecting them, we shall live in a state of watchfulness; in order not to lose the great benefit placed before us, through the enticement of any sin by which we might be led to deny Christ. One who really has a Christian hope, will be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God;" being "diligent that he may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." (2 Peter iii. 12—14.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I realize the future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a fact that will certainly happen?

What effect does the uncertainty of the time of his coming produce in me?

Does it make me watchful against every thing that offends God, lest by a sudden call from this life, or by the Lord's speedy coming, I should be found unfit for his kingdom of glory?

2. If it is the duty of every Christian to be watchful for the coming of the Lord, how much more is it the duty of every Minister of Christ ; since they have not only to take care of their own souls, but also to provide food for the souls of others, and to watch for them as those that must give account. (Heb. xiii. 17.) And private Christians who read this portion ought also to feel the great responsibility which is laid upon their ministers ; and considering that they are but “ men of like passions with themselves,” (though placed in circumstances which require so much more strength and support) they ought to feel it a strong duty to pray earnestly that God would be pleased to bless the ministers of the Gospel with a diligent spirit in their work, whilst waiting for the return of their Lord and Master.

QUESTIONS.

Do I think of the great responsibility which is laid upon the Ministers of the Gospel ?

Do I pray for Christ's ministers in general, and my own Minister in particular ?

3. Our Lord here gives us very important information, as to the different degrees of punishment which different sinners will suffer in the world to come. This passage is sometimes used by inconsiderate persons, for the purpose of taking comfort from a comparison of their own sins with those of other people, which they judge to be more aggravated. No such comfort can properly be drawn from our Lord's words ; which, carefully considered convey one of the most painful statements he ever made. He informs us indeed, that in the condemnation for sin there are different degrees of suffering ; and that some will receive a more severe punishment, which he calls

"many stripes," while others will be less severely punished, which he describes by "few stripes." His first object seems to be to point out that those who *have* the knowledge of God's will are answerable for more than those who have *not* such knowledge : but every sinner who is condemned will receive such a punishment as will be terrible indeed, since all will be cast out of the presence of God ; though some will be much worse off than others, he that is best off, as being beaten with fewest stripes, will still be in hell, that being the punishment referred to under the comparison of beating.

But besides this, the passage shews the sinfulness of acting against the knowledge of what is right, in a much stronger manner than appears without a careful attention to the words. The servant who knew his Lord's will is described as having a heavy punishment, for leaving undone what he knew he ought to have done ; or for what are called sins of omission. Now this is a more frequent offence, and one far less apt to burden the conscience, than the doing "those things which we ought not to have done." When we examine ourselves whether we have acted up to our knowledge, by not neglecting what we feel we ought to do ; how few are there who can reasonably satisfy themselves that they are not in a condition to deserve the many stripes, instead of taking comfort by any comparison as to their actual offences.

On the other hand, the sins described as those of the servant who did not know his Lord's will, are just those which many people excuse altogether, as not being offences at all. But right and wrong are not confounded in the sight of the pure God, because men have corrupted themselves and

closed their eyes, so as to call evil good and good evil; which is the real occasion of what may be called sins of ignorance, the sins referred to in this case. We well may make use of the Psalmist's language—"who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." (Ps. xix. 12.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever examine myself as to the sins of omission which a just God might charge against me?

Do I take comfort because I cannot charge myself with any remarkable sin of commission?

Am I satisfied with the thought of receiving few stripes, because it is better than receiving many?

Have I considered that to receive punishment at all, instead of pardon for Christ's sake, is to be cast out of the presence of God for ever?

Does this thought make me more earnest in securing the salvation of Christ?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for a lively spirit of watchfulness, in order that you may be ready to enter into the joy of the Lord at his Coming.

2. Pray for your Minister—that he may have grace to discharge the difficult duties assigned to him; and ask to be blessed with a spirit of prayer generally on behalf of the ministers of Christ.

3. Confess before God your sins of omission—humble yourself for them, as well as for your sins of ignorance; and plead the atoning of the blood of Christ to take away all your guilt.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Lord Jesus Christ, who hast promised that thou wilt come again in the glory of the Father with the Holy Angels, give me an earnest desire to partake of the blessings which thou hast laid up for them that love thee; and quicken me to a continual watchfulness against all those temptations which would lead me to forget thee, or to seek my rest and happiness in this world: so that I may be found ready at whatever time thou mayest appear, and may, together with all those who

are departed in the true faith of thy Holy Name, enjoy perfect bliss in thy eternal glory. (2) Thou hast sent forth thy ministers, to preach the Gospel, and to feed the flocks over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers: be pleased to bless them all with gifts needful to fit them for their great duties; give them a spirit of watchfulness, both for their own souls, and the souls of those committed to their care. Specially I pray thee on behalf of *(here mention your own Minister, or those in whom you are more particularly interested)*; endue *him* with thy Holy Spirit; enrich *him* with thy heavenly grace; prosper *him* with all happiness; and grant *him* many souls to present to Thee at thy coming. (3) I acknowledge, O Lord, my manifold sins and short-comings, and that I dare not compare my conduct with that which thou hast set forth as my example, without shame: especially I confess that I have left undone what I ought to have done, and that my sins of omission alone would be enough to bring upon me deserved condemnation. From all my sins, negligences, and ignorances—Good Lord, deliver me. Cleanse thou me from my secret faults. Open my understanding, that I may know thy will;—give me grace that I may have good desires to perform that will, and enable me by thy Spirit to bring the same to good effect. And for all my sins I humbly plead the precious blood thou didst shed upon the Cross for me, entreating thee to pardon me for thine own Name's sake. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOURTH PORTION.

Jesus concludes his discourse to his disciples and to the people.
Discourse, No. 19.

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xii. ver. 49 to 59.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xii. verse

50. straitened *means here* pained—anxious

58. hale drag

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Our Lord was now about to bring to a close the discourse, which has occupied the three last portions ; and in doing so he spoke of the consequences which would attend the preaching of his Gospel, and of the feelings caused in his own mind by the approach of his sufferings. He repeated some of the prophetic warnings given to the Apostles when he sent them forth upon a Missionary journey in Galilee, about a twelvemonth before. (Matt. x. 21, 22, 34—37 ; see vol. iii., pages 19 and 23.) He told them that the effect of his coming upon earth, and the preaching of his Gospel, would be to light as it were a fire in the world, by producing wars and discord, and angry quarrels ; and if the first bursting out of this violence against himself

were so near at hand, that the flames might be even said to be already kindled, why should he wish it otherwise? what should he desire, but that the great object of his coming might be sooner attained? But the fire of suffering would burn most fiercely round himself; so that he would be drowned (as it were) in those agonies, as a person is said to be "buried by baptism into death." (Rom. vi. 3, 4.) Jesus was now looking forward to that baptism in the fire of suffering, which in a few weeks more would come upon him; and with what earnest and painful anxiety did his human soul desire, that this deep trial might be over. (John xii. 27; xiii. 27. Luke xxii. 41, 42.)

Our Lord then asked his disciples, whether they imagined that the consequences of his having come from heaven would be to make all the inhabitants of the earth at peace and friendly one with another. This would not be the case: on the contrary, the Gospel would be the cause of dividing and separating the best friends from each other. From the time that its preaching began, its effect would be that in a family, consisting perhaps of five persons, even such a small circle would be divided:—three might take the side opposed to the Gospel truth, and the remaining two might be under the power of its blessed influence; or two might be resisting the truth, and standing against the other three, who through God's mercy had received the truth. There would be dissensions and quarrels in families: fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, mothers-in-law and sons wives would be set against one another.

With the impression on his mind, arising from

the near view of the sufferings which were coming upon him, he turned from his disciples, and spoke to the people in general, some of whom had lately asked him for a sign out of heaven, to prove that he came from God. (Luke xi. 14—16.) He had already answered this enquiry more than once, by refusing to give them the sign they wanted (Matt. xii. 38—42; xvi. 1—4): and upon both occasions he had reasoned with them, and warned them of the responsibility they were under with their present signs. He now repeated the argument he had lately used, suiting it more particularly to the special circumstances of the immediate approach of his atonement. Whenever they saw a cloud beginning to shew itself in the west, they knew that rainy weather was at hand (1 Kings xviii. 44); and it turned out according to their expectation: when again the south wind began to blow, they knew that hot weather was coming on; and were not mistaken. He then reproached them as hypocrites because, though they observed correctly the natural course of things in the sky, and on the earth, they would not pay the same attention in comparing the course of events with the appointed order of things which had been foretold in God's word; more especially with reference to that particular time to which they had then attained; and which, as being about the close of his ministry upon earth, was marked with many signs which ought to have awakened and satisfied every one who knew the Scriptures. Why did not their own sense enable them to form a just opinion of what was going on, in spite of the erroneous instructions of their false teachers? The time however that remained was short; and He urged them

to make use of the little moment which was left, and to take the right way of salvation before it was too late ; when after having crucified the Lord of glory, and hardened their hearts, they would as a nation be left desolate, and given up to their obstinate blindness. This seems to be the meaning of the comparison, with which our Lord finished his discourse to the people. He supposed himself addressing a person who was indebted to another, but who had not paid his debt ; so that the creditor had begun to take measures for obtaining payment by law ; and Jesus advised the debtor to take advantage of the last possible opportunity that he could have for making a friendly arrangement with his creditor, even while they were actually on the road to go before the magistrate who was to judge the cause. For if the debtor did not profit by that occasion, he would be brought before the judge, who would pass sentence on him, and give him into custody to the jailer, to be put into prison ; and when once there, he could never come out, without himself paying the whole of his debt.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture : see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. As the time of Christ's sufferings approached (the agony of which he well knew beforehand) we find him manifesting the feelings which belong to man's nature ; and expressing, upon more than one occasion, the painful anxiety which such a prospect was fitted to produce. This should lead us to consider, in the first place, Christ's entire oneness with us as men ; the only difference is that which is produced in us by sin ; whereas in

Him there never was the least approach to sin. We may gather from this expressed feeling of Christ, a deep sense of the exceeding bitterness and the terrible nature of sin, since it occasioned that which could so affect the soul of a pure and sinless man who had nothing to suffer for himself, but had undertaken the suffering as an atonement for our sins. And besides this, the "straitened" state of Christ's soul should lead us to reflect on the vast power of his love for sinners, which could make him undergo that agony; the very expectation of which was so painful to him.

QUESTIONS.

Do I feel more hatred to sin, when I find its bitter effects upon Jesus Christ?

Do I feel more love to Christ, when I see the greatness of his love for me?

2. The third application of the eighty-third portion (vol. iii., page 29) is suited to our Lord's statement of the effect of his Gospel in dividing the members of families.

3. The second application of the ninety fifth portion (vol. iii. page 167) should be read, in order to apply the similar remarks which our Lord made upon this occasion. There is however a particular purpose in the present portion, besides the general object of the former one. It was now very near the moment for the fulfilment of the prophecies, concerning the humiliation and suffering which were the object of his first coming; and the signs of the times were more distinctly marked than before, so that people might have found out the truth by the exercise of their own common sense; and the special application of our Lord was to induce the Jews to take advantage of

the opportunity now afforded them for receiving Christ as their Saviour. After reading the application of the former portion above referred to, it becomes a matter of serious importance to enquire, whether *we* may not be living now in the last days of the dispensation of Gospel mercy; whether we are not drawing near the moment for the perfect fulfilment of the prophecies concerning that long-promised glory and blessedness, which are the object of Messiah's second coming: and whether the signs of the times are not so much more distinctly marked now, that reasonable people may be expected to lay aside the unbelieving notions ascribed to the scoffers, (who say—'Where is the promise of his coming? for since the former generations have passed away, every thing continues as it did from the beginning, 2 Peter iii. 3, 4), and to judge of their own selves what is scripturally "right" on this important point. At all events it must be the wisest course to give diligence, even "to-day while it is called to-day," that we may be delivered from our sins by Him who alone can deliver us; so that we may be found ready, at whatever time the Son of Man shall come in his glory, "to be admired in all them that believe, and to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. i. 7—10. Heb. iii. 12—15.)

QUESTIONS.

Am I really desirous of knowing what God will expect me to have known, concerning the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to prepare myself for that day?

Do I shew this desire, by a humble search of the Scriptures for that purpose, and a prudent prayerful attention to the signs of the times, as they may relate to that point?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for a more hearty abhorrence of sin, and a more entire dependance upon the love and sympathy of Jesus Christ.
2. Pray to be enlightened upon the subject of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory ; and to be led to attend to the signs which prepare for that event, that you may apply them so as to be ready to appear before him.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

1. O Holy God, who hast manifested thy justice and thy hatred of sin, by pouring out thy wrath upon thine own Son Jesus Christ, as the atoning Lamb appointed to bear the sin of the world, give me of thine own Spirit ; teach me to be likeminded with thee in abhorring sin, for my Saviour's sake ; enable me so to feel the power of his love, and the blessing of his sympathy, that I may cast all my care upon him, and love him more perfectly. (2) Enlighten my mind to discern whatever thou hast revealed in thy holy word, concerning the blessed day of his return in glory. Make my heart to love his appearing, in order that I may sincerely seek the knowledge of it ; give me a spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind, in comparing the signs of the times with the statements of thy word, in order that I may be diligent in every preparation ; and whenever he shall come may be found of him without spot and blameless, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIFTH PORTION.

The barren Fig-tree.—*Parable No. 13.*

PLACE. *Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xiii. ver. 1 to 9.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

[There is no word used in this portion, the meaning of which seems difficult to understand.]

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Some persons were listening to our Lord's discourses (related in the last four portions) who mentioned to him a circumstance which had lately occurred at Jerusalem. Whilst some Jews from Galilee were engaged in offering sacrifices, they were put to death by Roman soldiers sent by Pilate the governor, even whilst employed in the Temple in that holy work. The object of the persons who told this to Jesus seems to have been to shew their suspicion, that such a death

must have been permitted by God as a judgment for some special sins (Acts xxviii. 4. 1 Cor. xi. 29, 30): for our Lord replied, by asking, whether they supposed these Galileans to have been greater sinners than their neighbours, because God allowed them to be treated in this manner. Such however was not the case: but those to whom Jesus was speaking, and every one else, would (unless their hearts were changed) be exposed in like manner to the wrath of God.

The Galileans had suffered death from the violence of men: but (to make the case still stronger) he reminded them of a fatal accident which had occurred; when one of the towers on the walls of Jerusalem (the one near the spring of Siloam, see John ix. 7, pages 20 and 68) fell down, and eighteen persons were buried under the ruins and killed.—Here was a case, in which the sufferers had been suddenly cut off by a providential act of God himself. Was it then to be supposed, that those who had thus died were greater sinners than all the other inhabitants of Jerusalem to whom no such misfortune had happened? Certainly not: but all, who remain without that change of heart which is meant by the word repentance, shall likewise suffer the judgment of God.

To these plain declarations Jesus added a Parable. A person had a garden, with a fig-tree in it; he came at the proper season expecting to find fruit on the tree; but he was disappointed, for none was forthcoming. Having already allowed this tree to remain three

years, though it bore no fruit, he gave notice to his gardener to cut it down, since year after year it had been unprofitable; why should it be left, to occupy ground which might be better employed? The gardener however begged his master to give it a little longer trial, and see what might be the result of another season. In the mean time he would loosen the earth round it, and put fresh manure to the roots; perhaps this might make it fruitful: but if this should fail, then the tree must be cut down.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. It is very necessary to keep in mind that rewards and punishments are not given (in the ordinary course of God's dealings) during the present life. It is true that in general good conduct will be advantageous, even in this world, and bad conduct disadvantageous: but this is very different from punishment being the certain result of sin. Though striking instances have occurred of sudden judgment upon grievous sins; yet we must wait until the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, before we shall be able to discover *which* of the providential afflictions, that have occurred to any person, have been sent in God's anger as punishment for sin. We are all too apt to forget that the present life is only a state of trial, of which the final results are to be expected in the life to come. It is a very common mistake to suppose that distresses are sent upon those of whom we think ill, as a token of God's anger

against them : it may not be often declared, but is very often secretly felt, and sometimes hinted at. This was the case with the people who told our Lord of the slaughter of the Galileans ; and his answer should supply us with a lesson, which will apply to every such feeling. We have no right to judge, whether a neighbour who may die suddenly, or may be deeply afflicted by Providential circumstances, is suffering under God's wrath, or is chastened and tried by his love. The sudden death of another is a direct call to repentance, addressed to all who have knowledge of the fact : instead of considering why that other was taken away, we ought to examine whether, if we were called away in like manner, we should receive judgment for our sins, or mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS.

When I hear of a sudden death, which do I think of most ? how the person came to die, or how it would be with me, if I too were to be suddenly cut off ?

Do I ever feel disposed to judge those who have been cut off suddenly ? And do I indulge such a disposition ?

2. Our Lord here speaks of but one alternative which is offered to all men—either to repent or to perish. This was what Jesus preached from the beginning (Matt. iv. 17) ;—what the Apostles preached when they were first sent forth (Mark vi. 12) ;—what they preached when the Holy Ghost was first given (Acts ii. 38 ; iii. 19) ;—what they continued to preach to the end (Acts xvii. 30.) The same alternative is placed before us by St. Peter (2 Peter iii. 9) ; it is in short the essential point of personal religion, that the mind

and heart should be changed about the things which offend God, and the things which please men. (Vol. i., page 106.) This is the meaning of the word which is translated "repent;" to continue in a state of mind changed from the love of former things which "are passed away," to the love of those things which "are of God" (2 Cor. v. 17), this is that "repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. vii. 10), without which a sinner must perish. Our Saviour's strong and repeated statement, ought to excite us to very earnest self-examination, in order to ascertain whether we ourselves are really in a state of repentance.

QUESTIONS.

Do I feel the certainty that I must either be repentant in heart, or perish everlastingly?

What do I understand by being repentant?

Does my repentance imply a real change of heart? Or is it only a passing sorrow for having committed some particular offence?

3. The parable of the barren fig-tree not only confirms the doctrine, previously stated by our Lord, that except a sinner repents he shall certainly perish; but it also shews, that God's purpose in bringing any one into his kingdom is that he should manifest the power of the Holy Spirit by the holy effects produced in his conduct. The Lord's vineyard stands, in the parable, for the outward and visible Church of Christ; the pains taken by the gardener set forth the means of grace appointed and employed for the benefit of its members; and the Lord visits each professing member, for many and many a year, seeking the

fruit of those means. This is the object he has in view, during the time that we are in this life,—that we should “bear much fruit” (John xv. 8) : if this object should be disappointed, and no spiritual fruit results to the glory of God, the sentence to cut the tree down will be given. They who survive will not be able to know that it has been in judgement, (this our Lord has taught us in the former part of this portion) ; but the fruitless professor will be taken from this world, and in the great day the cause will be seen. Thus while Jesus forbids us to judge as to the cause of the calamities which befall our neighbours ; he at the same time warns us to avoid the judgement, which will fall upon ourselves as cumberers of the ground, if we do not fulfil the object for which he placed us in his Church, and has left us so long to profit by its privileges.

There is another view taken of the meaning of this Parable ; by which an especial warning is conveyed to the Jews, as a nation which Jehovah especially planted in the earth, in order to shew His glory ; and had visited it, in order to find the fruit which might be expected from all their privileges, but had been disappointed. (Isaiah v. 1—7.) Jesus Christ (as the dresser of the vineyard) pleads for a little longer delay ; so as to afford the favoured people every possible opportunity of profiting by the advantages which they had, and by the greater ones he was about to send them in the gift of the Holy Spirit ; in the hope that it might not be in vain. In this point of view, the Parable of the barren fig-tree may be considered as the first warning, which the

Lord gave the Jews of their approaching destruction ; of which he afterwards prophesied more plainly and less conditionally. This explanation of the parable does not in the least interfere with the former view of its meaning,—both may be intended ; but still that which suits our own individual case is the most important for each of us to consider.

QUESTIONS.

Am I fulfilling the purpose for which God gave me the knowledge and privileges of the Gospel ?

What fruit am I bringing forth, to shew that I am a tree of the Lord's planting ?

How long have I turned my Christian knowledge to no account for the glory of God ?

What effect do the means of grace produce upon me now ?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray to be preserved from unprepared death ; and for grace to profit by every warning that is given you by the sudden death of others.

2. Pray to be preserved from a spirit of uncharitableness respecting those who die suddenly, or to whom calamities happen ; and ask for the grace of self-examination ; in order so to judge yourself that a spirit of true repentance may be increased by every such warning.

3. Pray that your repentance may make you fruitful in every good word and work, and that you may diligently seek to profit by all the means of grace still mercifully afforded you.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Good Lord, I pray thee to deliver me from sudden death ; keep me always in such a state of preparation for thy coming, that whensoever thou mayest send for my soul by death, the call may never come suddenly to me. Teach me how to apply to myself all the warnings of thy

providence which may befall others. (2) Let me never think harshly, nor judge severely, concerning those who are exposed to trial, or who die suddenly; but give me grace to prove my ownself, and examine whether I be in the faith. (3) Give me a spirit of true repentance, that my heart being changed and my mind turned to thee, I may evermore shew forth thy praise, not only with my lips, but in my life; by giving myself up to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all my days. Let the fruit of thy grace abound in my whole conduct; and as thou hast not rewarded me according to my iniquities, but hast continued to me the means of grace and the hope of glory, grant that I may profit (before it be too late) by these thy great mercies, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SIXTH PORTION.

A woman healed of an infirmity on the Sabbath-day.—*Miracle No. 34. Parables No. 4 & 5 repeated.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xiii. ver. 10 to 21.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xiii. verse

11. infirmity *means here* sickness
 in no wise by no means
 17. adversaries opposers—enemies
 18. resemble liken

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

In the course of his journey towards Jerusalem (see page 161), our Lord was instructing the people upon the Sabbath-day in a Synagogue, as was his custom. There was a woman present, who had for eighteen years been so bent and crippled with bodily weakness, that she had no power to sit up straight. This severe affliction was produced by an evil spirit. Our

Lord, telling her to come near, put his hands upon her; saying, at the same time, that she was relieved from her weakness. No sooner was this done, than she raised up her body, and began to praise God for this merciful deliverance.

Upon seeing this miracle, the ruler of the Synagogue was very angry, because our Lord had done this cure upon the Sabbath-day. He told the people that work should be done during the six days of the week; and that they ought to come to be cured upon some of those days, and not upon the Sabbath. Upon this Jesus charged him with hypocrisy, and asked whether it was not the allowed custom on the Sabbath to take cattle from the stable to water, and bring them back again? And if it was proper to do this work on the sabbath-day, in order to prevent an animal from feeling the inconvenience of thirst,—how much more proper was it to set free (even on the Sabbath-day) one of the children of Abraham the friend of God, who had been kept so long tied up (as it were) under the power of Satan.

Upon hearing this answer to the ruler of the Synagogue, all those persons who opposed his doctrine, and sought to find fault with him, were put to shame: but the people expressed great joy at all these wonderful proofs of his power.

Upon this our Lord was pleased to repeat two of the parables, which he had spoken nearly two years before from the lake near Capernaum; the parables of the mustard-seed, and of the leaven. A full explanation and application of both these was given upon the former occasion,

and need not therefore now be repeated. See Matt. xiii. 31—33, portions 69 and 70; vol. ii., pages 227 and 231.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. We are here taught what is our Christian liberty, and a Christian observation of the Sabbath: this application has been already made upon a former occasion, when our Lord taught the same truths in a similar way. (See Matt. xii. 1 to 14; vol. ii. page 63.)

2. From the way in which our Lord speaks of this poor woman, as being a daughter of Abraham, taken in connection with the merciful deliverance with which he was pleased to bless her, we may infer that she truly believed in God: and yet we find her left under the power of Satan, as far as her body was concerned, for a period of eighteen years. This may have been in the same way as Job was exposed to his devices, in a greater degree than this poor woman. (Job i. 12; ii. 6.) But taking it in another point of view, the sins of true believers may expose them to suffer severely from the power of Satan; although the mercy of God does not forsake them, even while they are made to feel the proper consequences which result from sin. Cases are afterwards mentioned in the Scripture, in which persons were (by apostolic authority) placed for a time out of the church, and thus delivered unto Satan: in order that, by suffering the effects of sin for a season, they might be taught its bitterness through sad experience, and so “learn

not to blaspheme;" and that such chastisement of the flesh might be the means of promoting the salvation of the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Tim. i. 20. 1 Cor. v. 5. 2 Cor. ii. 6—11.) We find this woman however attending at the Synagogue with those who came to hear our Lord teach; and we may infer that, though Satan had bound her for eighteen years, she had not willingly been led along the broad road that leadeth to destruction. There are many cases in the present day, to which this situation may afford an important application. The natural corruption of our hearts too often grieves the Holy Spirit, and for a season gives Satan a power over us contrary to our better mind. Such an evil influence is the natural result of every sinful indulgence: and though the Spirit of God will not entirely withdraw himself from such, yet he manifests his just displeasure, and oftentimes keeps the sinner in a state, which makes him feel the affliction of being in any degree under the power of Satan. In such a state as this, a constant perseverance in using the means of grace, (however bowed down our hearts may be with contrition) and an earnest seeking after Jesus, will obtain from his love the same deliverance which this poor woman experienced; and in the Lord's good time the sinner shall be loosed from his spiritual infirmity.

QUESTIONS.

Do I bear in mind that every act of sinful indulgence exposes us to the increased power of Satan?

Do I feel that, if Satan's power has been restrained from over-coming me, it has arisen from the mercy of Christ?

Am I ever tempted to withdraw from the means of grace, and

to think that Christ will not hear me, because I have done that which was wrong ?

Or—do I, on the contrary, use the means of grace more diligently, and pray to Jesus Christ more earnestly, whenever conscience tells me that I have given Satan an advantage over me ?

3. Our Lord calls this ruler of the Synagogue a hypocrite. That state of mind may well be considered as hypocrisy, which passes over those accommodations of God's law that happen to be convenient, but cries out against such applications of that law as do not suit with personal feelings. This man saw nothing to blame in those ordinary works which were in fact real labour (though necessary and justifiable); but he considered that as a sinful breach of the Sabbath which, without any labour at all, freely relieved the afflictions of a fellow creature. This difference arose from his desire to find fault with Christ, which so blinded his mind that he did not see his own inconsistency; the proof of which afterwards made him ashamed of himself. We are every one of us liable to a similar bias from our own inclinations: and it ought to be a subject of earnest prayer, that, in cases which are contrary to our inclinations, we may always judge without prejudice, and upon the same principles that influence us in other cases, which do suit our desires.

QUESTIONS.

Before I disapprove of the conduct of others, do I examine my own conduct, in order to see whether I am myself acting upon the principles which I expect others to act upon ?

If ever I have discovered this not to be the case, am I ready to acknowledge the fault as being ashamed of the prejudice ?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for that spirit of Christian liberty in keeping the Sabbath which our Lord has explained.

2. Pray that you may be restrained by the grace of God from giving Satan any power over you; and that whenever you fear such power, your faith may not fail to seek Christ in all the means of grace.

3. Pray to be kept free from the effects of prejudice.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) Lord God of the Sabbath, grant that I may stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made me free; and teach me to enter into the spirit of thine appointment of that Holy day; so as to receive the blessing which thou hast promised to those, who keep thy Sabbath in spirit and in truth. (2) Defend me from the devices of Satan; let not the evil one have power, through any sin, to keep me from Thee: but stablish me by the power of the Holy Ghost, and strengthen my humble trust in the love and power of Christ, to pardon my sin and pity my infirmities. (3) Enlarge my heart, to feel for the circumstances of others; and guard me by thy Spirit from judging to my own advantage with a prejudiced mind; grant these mercies for Jesus Christ sake our Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED & THIRTY-SEVENTH PORTION.

Jesus answers whether few be saved.—*Discourse, No. 20.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xiii. ver. 22 to 30.

III. THE MEANINGS;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xiii. verse

24. strive *means here* struggle (as in wrestling)

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Our Lord continued his journey onwards toward Jerusalem; and as he passed through the different towns and villages in his way, he publicly instructed the inhabitants.

One day a person put a question to him, whether the number of those who are saved will be small. Jesus referred to what he had said nearly three years before, in his Sermon on the Mount near Capernaum. (Matt. vii. 13, 14; vol. i., page 343.) He represented mankind as standing outside of that "way" of salvation, of which he had then spoken; and he bid all men make the most earnest endeavours to get to the entrance (Matt. xi. 12; vol. ii, page 128)—struggling as those who are

wrestling—pressing like persons in a crowd—striving to get through the narrow gate he had then described : because many would try to get in, who would not succeed. Then he compared himself to the master of a house ; and told them that it would be too late to try and get in, if they waited until the master should get up from his seat and lock the door of the house. Those who then for the first time made efforts to get into the house, by standing at the door and knocking, might call to him as their Lord, and beg him to open the door again to let them in ; but he would answer that he did not know where they came from ; that is, he knew nothing about them, and did not acknowledge them as his servants. Upon this they would bethink them of their former acquaintance with him ; and put him in mind how they had joined in the public feast he had given, and how he had come to their very homes to instruct them. To all this however the Lord would give the same reply as before ; telling them that he had no reason to think that they had any business with him then—that he did not know where they came from. Upon this however he would command them, each and every one whose actions had been unrighteous, to be gone. (Matt. vii. 21—23 ; vol. i., page 349.)

Jesus then shewed, by his application of the comparison, that by the house of which he was the Master, he meant to speak of that glorious kingdom which will begin, when he shall rise up as it were from his waiting posture at the right hand of the Father. (Mark xvi. 19. Acts i. 11.) He told the Jews about him that the time was coming when they would see the reality of the

kingdom of God's glory ; and would see their great forefathers, the patriarchs and prophets, actually partaking of its blessedness : whereas they themselves would only weep and gnash their teeth in bitterness of soul, at finding themselves shut out. Our Lord repeated also his former declaration, that many people, from all parts of the world, would be admitted in the kingdom of glory upon the same footing with the Jewish patriarchs and prophets. (Matt. viii. 11, 12.) Then he gave them another lesson of humility ; saying that some who were now lowest in the esteem of others would be found in the first places of that kingdom ; whilst some, who in the opinion of men were likely to be first, would turn out to be last amongst the saved.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture : see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. People are very apt to put off the consideration of the things which concern their own salvation, by curious enquiries about general doctrines as applied to others. This was shewn in the question now put to our Lord—"are there few that be saved?" Upon a former occasion, in the course of his instruction to the people, he had distinctly stated "few there be that find" the narrow way "which leadeth unto life;" and he afterwards repeated the substance of this statement more than once (Matt. xx. 16; xxii. 14.) But now, when the question was directly put to him, Jesus only answered it by a command, discouraging this tendency to think of the case of others, and enforcing the application of the truth to our own case. 'Look each of you to yourself,

diligently endeavour to force your own way through every hindrance, that you may be saved, whatever may happen to others :’ such is the point of our Lord’s reply. The Greek word for *strive*, is a very forcible one, and used to express the violent struggle of wrestlers or foot-racers ; while the expression is made still more urgent by the reason which he gives for using it. As before he had said ‘few will succeed ;’ so now he says, many will try and fail ;” hereby implying that our efforts must be so strong and earnest as not to fail of success. A self-denying diligence in “laying aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us,” (Heb. xii. 1) is absolutely necessary to establish a reasonable hope, that we are among those for whom God has prepared the kingdom of glory. (Matt. xxv. 34.) See also the second application to the fiftieth portion. (vol. i, p. 345.)

QUESTIONS.

Am I really *striving* to become fitted by God’s grace for the enjoyment of His kingdom of glory ?

By what acts of self-denial and diligence is my striving shewn to be earnest ?

2. Delay is dangerous in all things ; but in nothing more fatally dangerous than in the concerns of the soul. To receive the grace of God in vain—to put off the effectual application of that knowledge and those means of grace which we enjoy, is to risk being cast out, when the true people of God shall be admitted to the enjoyment of His glorious kingdom. How awful will be the alarm of those who begin for the first time to knock in earnest, when the door has been closed !—who for the first time cry to be admitted, when the Lord will no longer hear their cry ! (Prov. i. 24—31.) The plea, which our Saviour supposes to

be brought forward by these too-late applicants, shews that he especially refers to persons who have made a profession of religion, and have lived under the instructions of the Gospel, while they continued in a course of life inconsistent with their holy profession. Many persons make similar pleas; they rest their hopes of future blessedness upon being regular communicants—eating and drinking at the Table of the Lord, and upon attending the ministry of faithful preachers of the Gospel. Such benefits however only increase the sin of those who, while they join in the outward ordinances, deny the reality of the grace they thus seem to seek, by living in unrighteousness. (Titus i. 16.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever indulge myself in sinful gratifications under the mistaken notion that there will be time by and bye to return to God and give up the sins I love?

Do I put off the consideration of the things of eternity? Or,

Do I strive earnestly to realize them, and to make them effectual upon my conduct?

3. It is not uncommon to find persons, who pride themselves upon their own attention to outward ordinances, looking with contempt upon others whom they consider as below them in christian attainments; nay perhaps presuming to judge, by some mistaken standard, that they are not in a state of salvation. We ought carefully to guard against any approach to so dangerous a condition. It has been said, that those who are admitted to the glorious kingdom of God, will be doubly surprised at finding some there whom they did not expect to see; and some absent whom they did not doubt would be there. What Jesus here states should enlarge our charity concerning others, and our humility concerning ourselves;

lest we fall into the condemnation of those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." (Luke xviii. 9. See also the 4th application of the 54th portion vol. ii. p. 111.)

QUESTIONS.

By what standard do I judge of others? and by what of myself?
Do I busy myself about the spiritual state of others more than about my own? Do I count myself among the *first* or the *last*?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for grace to strive earnestly and continually to make your calling and election sure.
2. Pray to be able to avoid delay; and to bring forth the fruits of all the means of grace you enjoy.
3. Pray for an enlarged spirit of charity towards those who may seem beneath you; and for humility to consider yourself as last rather than first.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Almighty God, who givest to all men liberally and upbraidest not; give me strength and resolution earnestly to struggle against every thing which would hinder me from entering the narrow gate of salvation; and quicken my endeavours unto the end, that I may make my calling and election sure. (2) I know not what a day may bring forth: teach me to keep ever in mind that now is the accepted time, and that the door of heaven may be shut against me to-morrow. While I eat and drink at thy table, O Saviour, and hear thy blessed word, let me not presume upon these privileges, nor rest upon them: but give me thy Spirit, and make these means effectual to cleanse me from sin, and to enable me to walk in the way of righteousness. (3) Enlarge the spirit of love within me, so that I may rejoice in the salvation of all men; with a constant sense of my own unworthiness of the glories of thy Heavenly Kingdom. AMEN. Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHTH PORTION.

Jesus warned against Herod.—Cures a man of the dropsy.

Conversation, No. 42. Miracle, No. 35.

PLACE. *Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xiii. ver. 31 to 35. and chap. xiv. ver. 1 to 6.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

[There is no word used in this portion, the meaning of which seems difficult to understand.]

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

The same day on which Jesus replied to the question concerning the number of those who will be saved, some of the Pharisees came to warn him that Herod (the Tetrarch or chief ruler of Galilee, see Matt. xiv. 1, vol. iii. page 35) was trying to put him to death ; and they therefore advised him to go away as quick as he could from the dominions of that prince. Our Lord bid them tell that crafty and deceitful prince that there was yet a little time—a day or two—during which He meant to shew forth his power by performing miracles, such as casting out evil spirits, and healing sick people : but that after the little period which yet remained—after that day or two—his work would be accomplished, and he himself completely ready for the great object for which he had come into the world. Until however that short time should be at an end, nothing could prevent his

going on with his work in Galilee; for it would be contrary to the appointment of God's Providence that He, as the great Prophet, should lose his life anywhere except at Jerusalem. This remark gave occasion to an affectionate expression of grief and compassion for the inhabitants of that devoted city; the city whose inhabitants put to death their inspired teachers, stoning God's servants sent with messages of pardon and peace. How often had Jesus himself acted upon the earnest desire of his heart to draw them to him, in order to preserve them from the coming destruction; just as a hen calls her young chickens to take refuge under her wings when danger approaches. They would not however attend to his affectionate and repeated calls: and now it was too late. He was approaching the city for the last time, knowing that its inhabitants would now complete their wicked resistance by putting him to death. When therefore he should leave their temple, the Jews would be left to the desolation they had brought upon themselves: nor would they see him afterwards until he shall come again in his glory, and they shall, as a people, acknowledge him as their Messiah, and bless him as coming in the name of Jehovah. (Isa. xii; lxii. Zech. xii. 9, 10.)

After this our Lord went to dine on the Sabbath at the house of one of the principal Pharisees; who probably had invited him as others had done before. (Luke vii. 36; xi. 37.) As usual, they narrowly observed every thing he said and did, in the hope of discovering some reason to find fault with his conduct. Amongst the poor people who waited at this Pharisee's dinner, in expectation of receiving some of the broken meat after it was over (see vol. ii., page 145), it hap-

pened that there was a man who was afflicted with the dropsy. Jesus knew what was passing in the minds of the lawyers and Pharisees who were present; and he spoke according to their thoughts, asking them whether it was according to the law of God to cure sick people on the Sabbath. As they could not reply according to their wishes, nobody answered his question. Upon which he desired the dropsical man to come to him; and immediately relieved him of his disease, and sent him away cured. Then he supplied the answer, which they would not give to his former question; by asking them whether, supposing one of their cattle should happen to fall into some hole or pit on the Sabbath-day, they would not immediately try to save its life by getting it out, even though it was on the Sabbath-day, when no ordinary work was to be done: and there was not one of them who could say a word against his argument.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The certainty which our Lord had, that the purpose of God must be accomplished, enabled him to go on boldly in the work in which he was engaged; even in spite of the cunning malice of him who ruled the country at that time. Jesus had the sure anticipation of divine fore-knowledge, that he must be killed nowhere but at Jerusalem; and therefore he knew that no device of Herod could possibly succeed in taking away his life while he was in Galilee. Although with respect to any object we may have in view we cannot have a like certainty, yet there are many cases in which a Christian, engaged in God's work

amongst men, may imitate this boldness of security, in order to strengthen his courage against those oppositions, which might otherwise alarm him and make him give up his intentions. When upon sound scriptural grounds we are sure, that our course is right and for God's glory,—that we are called to it by a distinct duty, and that the hindrances put in our way are unjust and ungodly;—in such a case we may strengthen ourselves by the same confidence as our Lord's, that nothing can hurt us, until we have done the work God has appointed for us. Besides this, while we are discharging our duty in dependence upon divine help, we may always apply with confidence the promise that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28); and may be comforted with the assurance, that God gives His angels charge over his people, to keep them in all their ways. (Psalm xci. 11.)

QUESTIONS.

Am I apt to be alarmed at the difficulties and dangers with which I am threatened while in the discharge of my duty?

Do I strive to assure myself that I am in the path of duty, in order that I may confidently depend upon divine protection?

2. It is very affecting to read our Lord's lamentation over that favoured people, to whom he had given so many opportunities of mercy, which had all proved in vain: while it is alarming to find, that the neglect of those opportunities made it at last necessary to withdraw them. This was a striking practical application of the principle previously laid down by Christ, and repeated by him upon different occasions: that "whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Matt. xiii. 12. Mark iv. 25. Luke viii. 18; see vol. ii.

pages 208 & 239.) It should make us very watchful not to allow present opportunities of instruction and grace to pass by, without diligently striving to gain all the benefit which they were intended to convey to us. In every difficulty or temptation, we should take refuge under the mercy and power of Christ; lest by our neglect we should induce him to leave us alone, and we find ourselves cast out in the great day of desolation.

QUESTIONS.

Do I value the means by which I may improve in spiritual things? and how do I shew that I value them?

Am I delaying to give up my heart fully and effectually to Christ? Am I resisting the mercy, by which he would gather me under his safe-guard?

3. See Luke xiii. 10—17; portion 136, page 239; also vol. ii., page 63.

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for a firm dependence on the care and protection of God; and that this confidence may help to keep you continually in the path of duty.

2. Pray for a watchful spirit against the carelessness and negligence which would prevent you from profiting by the means of grace afforded you.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Lord who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy steadfast fear and love; keep me, I beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make me to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy name. Strengthen my faith in thy gracious promises and keep me thereby steadfast in thy ways. (2) Make me ever watchful over the infirmity and corruption of my heart; lest whilst thou art stretching forth thy hands in mercy, to draw me to thyself by thy appointed means, I should neglect to profit by those means, and so fail of the only safety and salvation which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN.

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINTH PORTION.

Jesus reproves forward pride in company, &c.—*Discourse*,
No. 12.

PLACE—*Galilee*. TIME—*Less than two months before His death*.—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xiv. ver. 7 to 14.

III. THE MEANINGS;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xiii. verse

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 7. a parable | <i>means here</i> | a precept or rule of
conduct |
| rooms | | places at table |
| 10. worship | | honour, respect |
| 12. a recompence | | a kindness in return |

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

When Jesus was dining at the Pharisee's house (see last portion), he observed that people who had been invited tried to take the places at table, which were considered of the highest honour: he therefore reproved them, and instructed them how to behave in this respect. Speaking to one of them, he told him that, when invited to a feast, he ought not to go up to the couches placed at the top of the table, near the master of the house. (See vol. ii., page 144.) For it might happen that some one of the persons invited was above him in rank and station: and if such were the case,

when the master came in to dinner he would have to tell the person, who had beforehand taken the place, that he must go lower down, and let the other guest come to his proper situation at table. Thus the person, who had pushed himself too high, would draw the eyes of the company upon him, and would feel ashamed as he gave up the place and went to the bottom of the table. Our Lord's recommendation was, that a person going into company should, at first, place himself in the lowest position amongst them; then, when the master of the house observes the modest place he has chosen for himself, he will call him to a situation of higher honour; and this will produce a feeling of respect for him amongst the company. To this precept (or parable as it is called) Jesus added the general rule, that every person who takes honour to himself shall be disappointed, and made little of; while, on the contrary, every person who acts as one who is little in his own conceit, shall be brought to honour.

Our Lord then turned to the Pharisee who had invited him to dinner, and gave him instructions concerning the spirit, in which hospitality ought to be shewn. He told him that in making a feast, it must not be for the purpose of getting an advantage in return; nor, for that purpose, must he invite merely those who are his equals in station,—his relations, or his rich neighbours: but, on the contrary, when he wished to be hospitable, he should take care to bestow of his abundance upon those who are poor and afflicted—the cripples the lame and the blind. This would bring a blessing: for such people could give no advantage to a rich man by returning his benefits to him, but

God himself would undertake the return; which will be freely given, when those who are justified by the atonement of Christ shall be raised from the dead, that they may ever be with the Lord and enter into his joy. (See vol. iii, page 224.)

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. There is a manner of conducting one's-self, when in company with others, which marks very clearly the character of an humble man: and there is, on the other hand, a manner which plainly shews the self-conceit of a proud man. Neither the one nor the other are conscious of the effect produced by their outward demeanour; but the pride of the one and the humility of the other take their natural course. In a company of acquaintances meeting together, if there should be any place more honourable than the others, it will too often be found that many are endeavouring to occupy that place: while, on the contrary, a person who may be entitled to sit above others, will not, if he be really humble, push for the possession of the place which belongs to him, but remain in some less honoured situation. The acknowledgement with the lips that we are not deserving of honour, and the pretension to humility, are very different from the real feelings which they represent. An humbling of the heart before God in secret is sure to produce an unaffected humility of manner before men: therefore if we find ourselves contending for honour amongst our neighbours, we have great reason to fear, that the humility we profess before God is only self-deceit. Real humility of spirit will pro-

cure us more respect and honour from men, than we could justly claim: so that it becomes true, even in this world, that whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted.

QUESTIONS.

Am I particular about the marks of outward respect which I consider due to me?

Where there is any distinction of places do I take pains that other people should not get before me?

Or, Am I rather accustomed to be retiring and contented with the place I happen to occupy, without pushing forward to be above it?

2. In the instructions which our Lord gave, as to the mode of shewing hospitality, the great point to be observed is the *motive* to which he alludes. He does not mean, that we are never to enjoy the society of our friends and relations; but that we are not to appear to be hospitable and liberal to rich people, merely for the purpose of being repaid. This purpose and motive is what gives the character of right or wrong to anything; (as Christ had already declared in his Sermon on the Mount, Matt. vi. 1—18; see vol. i., page 287) and a person who seems very liberal in feasting his friends may be acting very selfishly and covetously in so doing, if he should be calculating upon a profitable return. One who desires really to enjoy the company of his friends, and can afford to receive them, should first of all give freely to those who are in distress a portion of his abundance; and then he may enjoy the friendly intercourse of his guests with a good conscience. Moreover he may remember with comfort that, although (however much he may have given in alms) he is still an unprofitable servant, and unable to justify himself from sin, yet “God is not

unrighteous, that he will *forget* his works and labour of love." (Heb. vi. 10.) Such liberality has no prevailing merit to save him (which is the work of Christ alone); yet it will not be without its merciful reward; which "they that are Christ's" (1 Cor. xv. 23) shall receive for His sake at "the resurrection of the jnst."

QUESTIONS.

What are my motives for shewing any kindness or hospitality to those who may be able to do me good?

What proof can I bring to convince myself that they are not self-interested?

What proportion is there between the amount of what I give away to those in distress, and the amount of what I spend in receiving my friends?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may manifest a spirit of true humility by a lowliness of demeanour towards all men.

2. Pray that a spirit of real charity may make you glad to do good to the poor.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O God, who lovest the contrite and humble spirit; give me I beseech thee such a deep sense of my own unworthiness, as may make me truly humble before thee; and grant that my humility may manifest itself in a course of lowly and unpretending conduct towards all men. (2) Enlarge my heart with a true spirit of Charity; and grant that I may ever be glad to distribute; that feeling for the distresses of others, I may rather give to them than gratify myself: so that when I receive the visits of my friends and relations I may never be guilty of selfishness or covetousness. I ask every blessing in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED & FORTIETH PORTION.

The Parable of the great Supper.—*Parable, No. 15.*

PLACE. *Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xiv. ver. 15 to 24.

III. THE MEANINGS;

[There is no word used in this portion, the meaning of which seems difficult to understand.]

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

The remarks which our Lord made, while at the table of the Pharisee, concerning the duty of considering the poor before giving feasts to the rich, ended with an assurance, that those who did so from the right motive shall "be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." (See page 258). A person at table, hearing this, observed, that he who should be admitted to feast in "the kingdom of God," should be indeed happy. What notion this Jew had of the kingdom of God does not appear;—whether a correct one, from reading the Old Testament,—or a mistaken one, from attending to the false interpretations of the Scribes: but in whatever sense he may have used the expression, our Lord was pleased to take up the remark, and to make it the occasion of a parable; in which he shewed how many objections would be made in order to avoid that very blessing which this person considered to be so great.

The parable represents a rich and powerful man who prepared a great feast ; which, according to the customs of those days, was to be a supper. He invited a great many of his friends to this feast ; and as the supper was made ready for them it must therefore be taken for granted that the invitations were accepted. As the time for the feast drew near, he sent a servant to say that the supper was ready, and that the persons invited should come. Every one of these guests however now declined the invitation. Though each brought forward different reasons, all agreed in this one point—that they desired to be excused. One said that he had purchased some land, and it was necessary that he should go and look at it ; so that he begged to be excused. Another said that he had just been stocking his farm with five pair of oxen, (with which field-labour used to be performed in that country), and he wished to see them tried ;—this must plead his excuse. Another made no apology at all ; but considered it quite enough to send word that he had lately been married, which of course would prevent his coming to the supper.

The messenger returned to his master, and told him the answers he had received. The master was justly indignant at the way in which the people whom he had invited thus neglected his hospitality ; and he desired his servant to go at once throughout the city in which he lived, from street to street, and even into the meanest alleys, and to collect all the poor people he could find, the beggars, the cripples, the blind, and bring them to the feast. The servant obeyed immediately ; and having gathered all he could find who answered the description, he told his master that these were come

to the supper, but that they did not fill all the seats, so that there was room for many others. Upon this the master of the feast told his servant, that he must go out of the city, and search the different roads in the country beyond, to find the travellers, and even the poor outcasts who had no place to lie in, except under the hedge by the way side. All these he was commanded to bring to the great supper which had been prepared, and was only waiting for the guests to be all collected. And as some might be reluctant to come to such a feast, being invited in such an unexpected manner, the servant was to press them by every means he could use, in order to force them to overcome their reluctance and join the feast. In commanding this, the master positively declared that not one of those persons, who had been first invited, should be admitted to partake of the supper.

In this parable the blessings of Christ's kingdom are described by the comparison of a great supper; and Jesus himself is the Master who, of his free goodness, has prepared those blessings. He had long before invited the Jews to partake of the glories of that kingdom, having set them forth by the Prophets of old, and under the types of the law which required a holy obedience. The Scribes and Pharisees, and their followers amongst the Jews, had all accepted this invitation; acknowledging the authority of the Prophets, and professing the strictest obedience to the Law, they looked forward to their own notions of the Messiah's kingdom. When however the time came for the fulfilment of the prophetic promises, these Jews had no inclination for that kingdom to which they were first invited: when our Lord's Apostles (described

as his servant) preached to them, they all excused themselves, being engrossed by worldly and self-indulgent occupations.

The Lord Jesus then sent his ministers to collect the outcasts and most degraded of the Jewish people—the publicans and sinners, the *lost sheep* of the house of Israel, as he himself describes them. These had not received the invitation sent by the Prophets, but considered themselves as shut out from any such honour. Of such as these however was formed the first Christian Church; and for several years no other persons were admitted but Jews, who spiritually answered to the description of the poor and the maimed the halt and the blind, spoken of in the parable as those found in the streets and lanes of the *Lord's city*; which marks the Jewish character of this second class of persons.

After the Christian Church had been gathered for some years entirely from amongst the Jews, the Apostles were sent to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (or people of all other nations); since for these there was room: and ever since Christ's Ministers have been urging, by every means, the conversion of all whom they can reach, “out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.” None however listen to their call, but those who are humbled by a sense of sin, and who have no refuge of self-righteousness to shelter them. The commission of the servant to go *out of the city* into the highways and hedges, represents this last call to the Gentiles. Our Lord at this time carried the parable no further than to relate this preparation for the great Supper; leaving the circumstances of the actual feast to be prophetically described afterwards in other parables (Matt. xxii.

1—14 ; xxv. 1—13) : the call of the Gentiles, by the preaching of the Gospel, is still going on, in preparation for the glorious appearing of the Lord.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture : see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. We may learn in the first place from this parable the difference between a mere outward acceptance of Christ's invitations, and a readiness to obey His call to leave earthly enjoyments, and to embrace the reality of spiritual things. To do this, the affections must be set upon things above, not on things on the earth (Col. iii. 2) ; which is the very contrary to the natural state of the heart. The self-righteous Pharisees were very willing to pass amongst men, as those who were the Messiah's invited friends and preparing for his kingdom : but when the true nature of that kingdom was set before them under the Gospel, they despised its glories, and excused themselves from its requirements. And it is the same with the self-righteous in all christian countries : they make a ready profession of religious principles, and by their formal use of the Creed they say they accept the Lord's invitation : but when the spiritual power of " the truth as it is in Jesus " is laid open to them, and the joys of entering into his presence are offered to them, they excuse themselves from the reality of that religion, which they have made it a boast to profess. It is a painful reflection, that our Lord solemnly declared that not one such person shall taste of His Supper ; no person, continuing in self-righteous neglect of the invitations of the Gospel can be admitted into His kingdom of glory.

QUESTIONS.

Do I feel the reality of spiritual religion, and look forward with joy to be called to see Christ

In what degree do I partake of the spirit of the apostle, when he said "that to depart and be with Christ is far better" than to continue away from him in this sinful world

2. The reasons given for refusing the feast in the parable, are of the same nature with those which now also prevent men from giving their hearts to the power of true religion. The first excuse was that, having bought a piece of land, it was necessary to go and see it. There was no such necessity for examining this land, since the purchase had been made, it was only because the pleasure of looking at his own property was greater in this man's heart than that of attending the supper, that it seemed to his mind to be a sufficient excuse. And in the same way the love of this world's goods so confuses the judgment, that they who are under its influence are not able rightly to compare the advantages of this world with the joys of the next; and so they consider it better to enjoy their present position, than to give themselves to the service of Christ.

The second reason for refusing to attend the great supper represents an excuse which is as commonly made by professing christians as the former. To stock a farm with cattle, and to see that they are fit for their work, are very proper occupations in their due season: but it is exceedingly sinful to make this, or any other business whatever, a reason for neglecting the concerns of the soul. However important the duty in itself, there was no necessity for trying the oxen upon the very evening fixed for the supper,—the next day would have done equally well; and so the man himself would

have thought, if his desire had been to do honour to the master, and to partake of the feast: but his mind was more intent upon his own business, and his heart more in that than in the other; and therefore he considered it a reasonable excuse. This is a very common state of mind among professing Christians; they set their hearts so strongly upon the busy actings of their daily life, that these leave no time or thought for the concerns of their souls. However easy it would be to postpone some useful work, religious matters have not weight enough in their hearts, to overbalance the importance of the present opportunity of doing it; and thus a matter in itself trifling (and even the greatest worldly business must needs be trifling, when compared with the eternal benefit of the soul) is made an excuse for neglecting the service of Christ. This is proved, by the many matters of worldly business, which are allowed to stand in the place of Sabbath-duties. The hour for divine worship arrives, and perhaps notice of the Lord's Supper has been given; but this or that matter connected with worldly work requires attention: how often in such circumstances do professing christians persuade themselves, that the business in hand is so important, that it affords a sufficient excuse for neglecting the Table of the Lord.

The third reason given in the parable represents a class of excuses, which are the most common of all; and those who make them take it for granted, like the man in the parable, that they require no apology. The man who had married a wife, and therefore of course could not come, shews the conduct of those who consider that the indulgence of our natural affections, in a

legitimate way, is a full and sufficient reason to account for any short-comings in matters of religion. It was probably because this notion is so common, and so suited to human nature, that immediately after delivering this parable, in order to point out the difficulty of becoming his disciple, our Lord stated the necessity of considering father, mother, wife, children, brethren and sisters, in a secondary point of view to himself. (See the next portion.) It is one of the most cunning deceits of the human heart, to use God's allowance of our natural affections for the purpose of sanctioning self-indulgence in their excess; and especially that kind of excess, which advances them to the place in our heart which God has reserved for himself. The man who did not attend the feast in the parable because he had married a wife, is included amongst those who the Lord declared should not taste of his supper: and so persons, who fancy that the requirements of some strong natural affection, under any particular circumstances, will serve on the great day as a sufficient reason for the neglect of spiritual religion, will (if they continue in that mind) find themselves cast out from the presence of the Lord.

QUESTIONS.

Does my desire for the things of this world hinder my readiness to serve the Lord Jesus Christ

Am I so occupied with my worldly business, that I think it necessary to put off the attention to the concerns of my soul?

Are any of my natural and proper affections hindering me from giving myself up to the duties of religion?

3. Our Lord left the parable of the great Supper unfinished, and breaks off after sending out the servant to gather strange guests from the highways and hedges. In this respect, the parable represents the position in which we stand at the present

time. Since the day when the Gentile Captain Cornelius was converted to the faith (Acts x), the ministers of Christ have been going into all parts of the world, to "preach the Gospel to every creature." After eighteen hundred years it may still be said to every sinner, "yet there is room:" and the great question should be with each of us—whether we have ourselves been brought into the true spiritual Church of Christ. If there be any doubt upon this point, how comforting to know that the door is not yet closed—the great Supper is not yet served—and that yet we may be admitted. But this can only be a comfort to those, who feel that even "to-day while it is called to-day," they must take advantage of the opportunity, which may very soon be withdrawn from them. This consideration accounts for the Lord's instruction to his servants to *compel* them to come in; which warrants the most earnest and zealous endeavours to urge upon sinners, in season and out of season, the necessity of accepting the Gospel invitation. Some persons are apt to be offended at the pressing exhortations which Christ's ministers are bound to use in this matter: but much greater ground is there for offence, if any are lukewarm in obeying the command they have received to *compel* sinners to come to Christ that they might be saved.

QUESTIONS.

Have I effectually received the Gospel, and spiritually become a member of Christ's church?

Am I ever offended with any instance of zeal on the part of ministers, who are earnestly endeavouring to save souls?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray to have your affections so set upon things above, that you may feel ready to enter into the Lord's presence whenever he may call you out of this world; and pray that he may hasten the coming of His glorious Kingdom.

2. Pray to be preserved from engrossing occupation, and from self-indulgence, so that they may not hinder you from devoting yourself to the service of Christ.

3. Pray for a reasonable assurance that you have been truly brought into the Lord's kingdom; and for a blessing on the endeavours of those who are striving to add others to the number.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O gracious Saviour, send thy Spirit into my heart with power, and give me a lively sense of the joys that shall be revealed at thy coming; so that being thereby dead to the things of the world, and with my affections set upon things above, I may be ready to depart and to be with thee whenever thou mayest please to call me. I beseech thee speedily to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom; that, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy Holy Name, I may have my perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul in thy everlasting Kingdom. (2) Fill me with thy Spirit, so that no worldly business, however lawful, may come before thy service in my mind, and no affection may occupy thy place in my heart: and let me not by any self-indulgence grieve thy Spirit, or provoke him to leave me for one moment to my own frailty. (3) I acknowledge, O Lord, that I am undeserving of thy mercy in calling me to the knowledge of thy grace; and enable me to bring forth such fruit, as may warrant me in believing that I am truly admitted to thy kingdom. Increase my knowledge, and confirm my faith in thee evermore; and grant that I may ever be disposed to forward the endeavours of those who are seeking to add to thy Church daily such as shall be saved, grant these mercies, blessed Lord for thine own name's sake. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIRST PORTION.

Jesus shews the necessity of counting the cost of being his disciple.—*Discourse, No. 22.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xiv. ver. 25 to 35.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xiv. verse

32. an ambassage *means here* a message by
another person

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

As our Lord proceeded on his journey towards Jerusalem, immense crowds followed him. Upon one occasion he turned round, and applied to them the strong declaration which he had formerly made to his apostles when he sent them forth to preach. (Matt. x. 37—39, vol. iii., page 24.) His words then were, "he that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me ;" and now he repeated the same truth in stronger language, and applied it still more largely. The word *hate* (as used in this text) means, to place a thing second in our affection, after some other thing more worthy to be loved which ought to stand first in our heart. The meaning of what Jesus said to the crowd is,

that, in order really to come to him and be his true disciples, our affection even for our nearest and dearest relations must be less than the love which we bear to Christ our Saviour. Nay more than this, a man must consider *himself*—his very life—as less to be cared for than the glory of Christ. (Acts xx. 24. Rev. xii. 11.) Unless his affections are thus regulated, it is impossible that he can be truly and effectually a disciple, however (like these crowds) he may seem to be going after Jesus.

Such a love for Christ may cost us dear in this world : it will often bring upon a person so great distress as to be compared to the pain of that dreadful punishment amongst the Romans called crucifixion. On such occasions the criminal was forced to take upon his shoulder the upper end of the wooden cross to which he was afterwards to be nailed, and so carried it to the place of execution. The troubles which happen to a Christian may be called his cross ; if he is not willing and ready to bear them along the way by which he follows Christ, it is impossible that he should be a true disciple.

A Christian must therefore be prepared for the sacrifices which he may be called to make ;—he must count the cost beforehand. This our Lord set forth by the following comparisons.

If any one wished to build a house, would he not beforehand get an estimate of the expence, and consider whether he had money enough to complete the building. Unless he took this care, he might find that, after laying the foundation and getting the walls some way up, he had no means to carry on the work to the end : and in such a case all who looked upon the half-finished building

would laugh at him as a foolish man, who began to build without being able to finish.

Again—suppose a king of one country desired to make war against the king of another country; he would first of all consider, and hold a council with his officers, as to whether he had soldiers enough to beat his enemy: and if he found that he had but ten thousand men, whilst the other king was likely to invade his country with double that number (so that he could not hope to gain the victory) he would of course try to keep at peace; and if the other was likely to come against him, would lose no time in sending ambassadors to make up the quarrel between them. Even so every christian must consider well beforehand the work he has to perform, the warfare he has to engage in; that he may be ready to give up any thing and every thing that he has, if it stands in the way of his being a true disciple.

In our Lord's Sermon upon the Mount, he had said that his disciples were the salt of the earth; for in the same manner as salt seasons and preserves that with which it is mixed, so Christians scattered about the world that lieth in wickedness, give a kind of seasoning to the company in which they mix, by their spiritual life and conversation. (Matt. v. 13; vol. i. page 249. Mark ix. 50; vol. iii. page 263.) And now whilst teaching the people the greatness of the sacrifices which would be required of them, he repeated the application of his former statement, "salt is good"; hereby implying, that his *true* disciples were indeed fit for the purpose which made him compare them to salt: but supposing the saltiness to be gone out of salt, so as to leave it insipid and tasteless, how

can the salt itself be seasoned? it would not only be unfit for the purpose for which it is intended, but it could not be used for manure to benefit the land; and must be thrown away as utterly useless. Even so there was an absolute necessity, that they who follow and profess themselves His disciples must be so in spirit and in truth, whatever it might cost them: otherwise, as mere professors, they would be wholly unfit for fulfilling God's purposes. To this remark Jesus called attention, by repeating that solemn warning which he had frequently used before, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The third application of the Eighty-third portion (vol. iii. page 29) is equally suitable to the present portion.

2. This portion contains our Lord's address to the people who followed him in his journey, more perhaps for the sake of curiosity or wonder, than because they really believed in him and loved him. His chief object seems to have been, to shew the necessity of looking forward to the consequences which will result from a real union with him. The second class of persons in the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii. 20, 21; vol. ii. page 192) describes those professing Christians, who fail in the end for want of that prudent forethought and consideration which our Lord here teaches. If those who hear "the word, and anon with joy receive it," were to pause, and *count the cost* of becoming christians indeed, they would either reject the Gospel at once, and not deceive themselves nor others by a hasty profession which they could not

support ; or else, if truly influenced by the Holy Spirit, they would expect “ the tribulation or persecution to arise because of the word ”—they would prepare against it, by seeking that help from above which is able to make them more than conquerors ; and in that strength they would stand in the evil day, and be of the number of those who “ bring forth fruit with patience.” (Luke viii. 15.) An inconsiderate agreement with the truth, gathered from some striking sermon, or felt under some remarkable circumstances, often leads people to appear to follow Christ for a season. When however some occasion for christian self-denial proves that they have not the grace to bear the cross, the speedy return of such persons to worldliness exposes them to the derision even of worldly persons ; who perceive that these hasty builders could not manage to carry on the work of religion, concerning which they made such a display at first. On the other hand, one who is really impressed with the power of religious truth (against which perhaps he may have at first desired to contend in argument), examines the Scriptures—considers the consequences of a religious profession—takes advice from those who understand the matter ; and convinced of his own weakness and natural inability to stand against the trials by which his faith will have to be proved, he clings closely to Christ, and follows him stedfastly ; loving him above all ; and sitting so loose from every thing in this world, that he is able at once to give up every thing that stands in the way of his love and obedience to Christ.

QUESTIONS.

Have I counted the cost of being truly a disciple of Christ ?

Have I ever made a profession of spiritual religion, to which I do not now pretend ?

When did I grow cold, and under what circumstances ?

Was it because I found that more was expected of me, as a spiritual Christian, than I thought I was able to do ?

Have I given myself up to Christ so entirely, that I am ready to forego any thing, which I cannot hold without dishonouring him ?

3. The latter part of this portion suggests the same application as that which is the first of the thirtieth portion. (See vol. i., page 252.)

VII. HEAD FOR PRAYER.

Pray for such a sense of the true value of eternal things, above all worldly things, that you may love Christ more than any thing upon earth ; and counting the cost may freely give up all for him.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

O God, who hast so loved the world that thou hast given thine only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life ; give me wisdom and grace, that I may be able truly to value that vast gift of thy love, and may know how infinitely the happiness of eternity with Christ exceeds every gratification which the advantages or the affections of this world can afford. Enable me to weigh every thing in the balance of the Scriptures, and to find Christ precious above all things ; so that clearly understanding the price to be paid—the sacrifices of earthly things to be made—and the troubles I may have to suffer, I may yet freely give myself to him, and to thy service, to the glory of His Name. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SECOND PORTION.

The lost sheep—The lost piece of money.—*Parables*
No. 16 and 17.

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap xv. ver. 1 to 10.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

[There is no word used in this portion, the meaning of which seems difficult to understand.]

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Amongst the persons who were most attentive in listening to the instructions of Jesus, the greatest number were that despised class of people the publicans, and generally others who were notorious for bad character. This caused great offence to the self-righteous Pharisees and Scribes ; who made it a charge against him, that he allowed the worst sort of people to come and talk with him, and even sat down with them at meals. (Matt. xi. 19. Luke v. 29—32 ; vii. 34—50.)

In consequence of this objection, our Lord took occasion to deliver a parable to them, in which he repeated the comparison he had made in his discourses at Capernaum. (Matt. xviii. 12 ; vol. iii., page 276.) Suppose a person had a flock of a hundred sheep, and one of them had got away and was lost ; would he not leave the rest of the flock for awhile in their pasture, and go and look after the stray-sheep, not giving up his search until he had succeeded. When such a man discovers his lost sheep, he knows the difficulty of driving it back in its wearied condition ; and therefore he rather carries it across his shoulders to the fold again. Then, when he gets to his own house, he tells his friends and neighbours of his success, and bids them come and make it an occasion of rejoicing, that after losing one of his flock he had recovered it and got it safe back again.

The latter part of this parable was not included in the comparison which Jesus had before used, and he explained the application of that part alone. In the same way that the owner of the sheep would tell his friends to wish him joy of the recovery of one sheep in a flock of a hundred, and never think of such rejoicing on account of the ninety-nine sheep that had stayed in the fold ; just so the return of a penitent sinner to God caused a peculiar joy in heaven, which would not have been occasioned by ninety-nine persons who should never have sinned.

Our Lord enforced the same truth by another parable. Suppose a woman possessed ten silver pieces (half-crowns, or shillings), and missed one of them—what would she do ? She would look

into every corner of the house, lighting a candle to be able to see in the dark places, and sweeping out every neglected spot ; and she would go on thus till she had found the money ; and when at last she had discovered it, she would tell her friends and neighbours of her success, and call upon them to congratulate her that she had recovered her money. Just in the same way the recovery of the soul of a repentant sinner is the cause of rejoicing in heaven amongst the angels of God.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture : see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

I. The Scribes and Pharisees took offence against our Lord from the self-righteous judgment which they formed, being ignorant of the sinfulness of their own sins, and taking strict account of the sins of others. This comparison between ourselves and others, by which we are satisfied with our own fancied superiority, is the secret cause of the offence which is sometimes taken at the conduct of those, who earnestly strive to bring outcasts in the world to the knowledge of the truth. Considering ourselves in the place of the ninety and nine sheep in the Parable, we are led to look with contempt upon the wandering one. Whereas the ninety-nine sheep are only mentioned in order to shew that the return of a strayed soul produces *extraordinary* joy in heaven, and are not meant to point out any class of people upon earth : for this truth is also the word of God plainly, “ all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ” (Rom. iii. 10, 23) ;

"all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way," (Isaiah liii. 6.) Every reluctance to do all that can be done to reclaim a sinner from the error of his way, is a mark of the same character as that of the Scribes and Pharisees ; and every self-denying effort to go to the utmost of our power, and (so to speak) "beyond our power," (2 Cor. viii. 3) in striving to turn even the worst sinners to Christ, is a mark that the Holy Spirit is forming our character to be like His.

QUESTIONS.

Am I easily discouraged by what people may say of me, from trying to bring gross sinners to Christ ? Or,

Am I earnestly desirous of doing all in my power, in spite of the opinion of the world, to turn even the worst sinners from the error of their way ?

2. It is scarcely possible to conceive a stronger way of expressing the deep interest, which is felt amongst the inhabitants of heaven in the salvation of sinners, than that taken by our Lord in this portion. Nor can anything afford a more encouraging assurance to every heart oppressed with a conviction of sin, that God is willing to receive even the greatest offender who turns to Him. Nay more, that every step of his return is in consequence of the diligent manner in which "the Good Shepherd" (John x. 11,) after bearing "the iniquity of us all," (Isaiah liii. 6,) has mercifully been in search of that straying soul. When a sense of our sins really comes upon us, we have need of all the encouragement which these parables afford, to feel convinced that it is yet possible for us to be brought back to the fold. But we may from this be assured, that the Spirit of Christ

himself has been seeking us; and that the angels of God will rejoice in our salvation. When our Lord made use of the comparison of the lost sheep upon the former occasion, though he did not expressly state that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" yet he introduced the subject in connexion with the statement that the angels, who have always the privilege of standing in God's immediate presence, are employed in attending upon, and taking providential care for, "them who shall be heirs of salvation," even before they have, by their conversion, given evidence to the world that they are children of God, (Matt. xviii. 10—14. Heb. i. 14; see vol. iii. page 275:) and it is not difficult to imagine how the angels, who have been employed by God in watching over a sinful creature during his blind wanderings in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, should find abundant joy at finding that soul turned by grace into the narrow path that leadeth unto life.

QUESTIONS.

Do I truly feel convinced, that I "*have* erred and strayed from God's ways like a lost sheep?" and am I awakened to a sense of the danger in which I have been at every moment of this wandering?

Am I encouraged to return by a sense of the mercy of Christ in dying for me, and of the Holy Spirit in seeking to turn me?

Do I feel more deeply sensible of the value of my soul, and the importance of its salvation, from finding what an interest is felt in this object by the angels of God?

Am I truly repentant?

3. See the second application to the 107th portion; vol. iii, page 277.

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for grace to be willing in simplicity of conscience, to make every effort to turn sinners to Christ, in spite of the opinion of the world

2. Acknowledge your sinful wanderings from the ways of God ; and pray for mercy that being brought safely to the fold of Christ, you may stray from it no more.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Lord, who knowest the secrets of all hearts, and who seest that I cannot endure a comparison with the standard of thy holy law, and that I am among the chief of sinners, keep me from the error of comparing myself with any of my fellow-sinners. Fill my heart with such an earnest desire to save those who are lying in the shadow of death, that I may diligently employ every means in my power to bring others to the knowledge of thy truth ; whatever hindrance the opinions of the world may cast in my way. (2) Almighty and most merciful Father, I have erred and strayed from thy ways like a lost sheep ; I have followed too much the devices and desires of my own heart ; I have left undone those things that I ought to have done, and I have done those things that I ought not to have done ; and there is no health in me : but thou Lord, have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner. Spare me, O God, who confess my sins ; restore me, who come to thee sincerely repenting of my sins, according to thy promises declared unto us by Christ Jesus our Lord : and grant that being taken into His fold, I may keep close to Him, and may ever hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of him who loved me and gave himself for me. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-THIRD PORTION.

The parable of the Prodigal Son.—*Parable, No. 18.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xv. ver. 11 to 32.

III. THE MEANINGS;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xv. verse

12. living *means here* property upon which they
were to live

16. fain have been glad

22. robe dress

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

By the two comparisons in the last portion, our Lord had shewn the Pharisees and Scribes their sinfulness in taking offence against him for receiving sinners. He thought fit to take this opportunity of preparing their minds for that general recovery of gentile sinners, which was afterwards to take place; one which he foresaw would be a still greater cause of offence to the Jews at large, than his conduct towards a few outcast Jews had been to these Scribes and Pharisees. For this purpose he told them a story, which has more completely the nature of a parable than the two comparisons he had just brought forward.

The story was this.—A man had two sons: the younger of these was unwilling to submit to the proper restraints of a parent's house; and he asked his father to let him have at once whatever fortune he meant to give him to settle him in life, or to leave him after his death. The father consented to this, and made a settlement of his property; portioning his two sons at once with an equal share of whatever he meant to bestow upon them.

As soon as this was done, the younger son turned into money all that he had thus obtained; and set off upon his own pleasure into the world. He travelled into a country very far distant from his native home; and there, being without any restraint from his father's authority or influence, he squandered his money in every kind of excess. His means did not last long; and presently he had not a farthing left. Just at that time too the harvest failed in the country where he was; and a dreadful famine was the consequence: so that he was driven to the greatest extremity of want.

In this condition he bound himself to the service of a man of that country, as a labourer. His master gave him an employment which must have been especially offensive to a Jew (Lev. xi. 7. Deut. xiv. 8); he made him drive out his pigs under the trees, and watch them while they fed. The unhappy man was reduced to such distress, that he would have been glad to satisfy his hunger by eating the husks of the nuts which were the pigs' food: but even these he was not allowed to touch.

During his time of riotous excess he had been as one beside himself (Eccl. ii. 2; ix. 3. Jer. xxv. 16; l. 38); but now distress had awakened him

from his mad dream, and he began, as it were, to recover his senses : he bethought him that in his father's family there were many servants who were all of them well fed with every thing they needed, and over and above all their need ; while he was ready to die for want of food. He determined to leave the service in which he had engaged and return to his father, and acknowledge the greatness of his fault in leaving him ; both in the sight of God, and also with reference to his parent : —he would humble himself as being wholly unworthy to be received as a son any more, only he would entreat to be taken into the family as a servant.

He set off on his journey homeward : and there was yet a long way to go before he could reach home, when his father caught a sight of him at a great distance ; and feeling his heart full of pity, he made haste and ran to meet him ; and on coming to him he immediately put his arms round his neck and kissed him. This unexpected reception did not alter the son's determination ; he acknowledged (as he had intended) the greatness of his fault, both in the sight of God and also against his father ; and he humbled himself as one wholly unworthy to be received as a son any more.

The father however would not let him go on with what he was going to add ; but called his servants, and bid them get the handsomest clothes he had, in which to dress his son ; and as slaves at that time were not permitted to wear rings or shoes, he told them to put a ring on his finger, and give him sandals to put on at once. These marks of favour shewed that he was received as

a son and not as a servant (Gen xli. 42. Esther viii 2. Isaiah xx. 2—4. Deut. xxv. 9, 10. Psalm. lx. 8. Gal. iv. 7.) He ordered also that the fatted calf should be killed, and a merry feast prepared ; (Gen. xviii. 7,) declaring, as a reason for this, that his son who had been (as it were) dead was now restored to life again :—he had been long lost to him, but was now recovered. Accordingly the feast was immediately prepared, and the rejoicing in the family began.

While all this was taking place, the eldest son (who had continued in his father's family) happened to be out of the way, engaged in the farm. As he was coming near home, he heard the sound of merriment from within. Being greatly surprised he called one of the servants, and wanted to know the occasion of all this. He was told that his brother had returned ; and that his father was so rejoiced at receiving him back in safety, that he had made a great feast to shew his joy.

Upon hearing this, the elder brother took great offence, and would not go into the house. When the father found this, he immediately went out to speak to the angry brother, and begged him to come in. But the elder son reproached his father, telling him that all along for many years *he* had kept at home in his service, and submitted to all his orders ; and yet no feast had ever been made for *him*, not even the gift of the commonest article of food, such as a kid, to have a day of merriment ; but, as soon as this other son had made his appearance—this fellow who had spent his money in debauchery—nothing less than the fatted calf must forsooth be killed for him.

The father replied, by stating the true cause of his present joy; for which the elder son had not given any occasion. He bid him remember that *he* had always been at home in the family, sharing in every thing which the father possessed. But there was just reason that they should make rejoicing for the return of his younger son; it was a brother, who having been as good as dead, might now be said to have returned to life again; one who had been lost, but was now brought safely back again.

The explanation of this beautiful parable is as follows:—God is represented by the father,—and the two great divisions of mankind by the two sons. The elder brother stands for the Jews; the younger brother for the Gentiles, or other nations of the world. The fortune or property that was divided between them, by the use of which they were to gain their livelihood, may mean that light and knowledge of God which all mankind originally possessed, and by which all men are “without excuse,” if they turn from God and disobey Him. (Rom. i. 18—22. Acts xvii. 26—29. Ps. xix. 1—6.) Up to the time when Abraham was called to form a separate division of mankind, there was no special difference in this respect between any people in the world; the knowledge of God was given to all alike: and, for four hundred years after, until his children had grown to be a nation in Egypt, very little difference existed.—The Gentiles however lost the knowledge of God, and turned away from his laws; while the Jews became a people in covenant with God, receiving from him direct communications of knowledge and grace; and so *they* may be said to be the son who

remained at home with the father; while the Gentiles are the son that went far off from the father.

The progress and miserable condition of the younger son when far off from the father, describes exactly the deplorable state of the Gentiles.— They went on from light to darkness, from bad to worse; giving way to all the sinful corruptions of human nature, and indulging in them without shame, until they completely hardened their hearts. The terrible accounts given of them in the Scriptures are fully confirmed by the accounts to be found in their own books of the old time, and by the experience of all who have visited them in these times. “As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Rom. i. 28); they “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,” (Rom i. 23). Thus they joined themselves by the practise of idolatry, in close bondage and slavery to Satan that strong man armed; who, under the various forms of Heathen gods, is the great citizen of every heathen country in the world (1 Cor. x. 20; viii. 4—6). He is a hard master, who degrades his slaves to the utmost vileness of sin; and though he brings them “to work all uncleanness with greediness,” (Eph. iv. 17—19,) yet he does not satisfy them with the husks of the enjoyments which they crave after.

This was, in a very especial degree, the state of the whole Gentile world, at the time our Lord came upon earth; the most horrible crimes were not only allowed, but were publicly followed, and

gloried in: no cruelty was too severe—no uncleanness too gross to be practised; and idolatry was universal—so that every people but the Jews were under the open rule of the devil. The world was well nigh in the same condition as before the flood; when “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. vi. 5), and all men seemed to have gone mad with self-indulgence. So the younger son in the parable is considered as having been beside himself; for in his extremity (we are told) “he came to himself.” This describes the awakening in the Gentile world which began to take place, when Cornelius the Centurion was converted. All who have followed Cornelius have discovered that, in God’s family upon earth, there is enough of the bread of life and to spare (John vi. 35), and though they have so deeply sinned that they are not worthy to be called His sons, yet do they desire to be His servants.

The conduct of the son in returning, and the father in receiving him home, describe very powerfully and exactly the repentance of the Gentile Christian Church, and the merciful compassion of God; shewn in receiving sinners in Christ Jesus, bestowing upon them the undeserved honour of sons (1 John iii. 1), and manifesting in his gospel the joy with which the blessings of salvation are laid open to the whole world. The Jews however, as a nation, have refused to partake in that rejoicing. They pride themselves upon their peculiar privileges—upon their first adoption—and miraculous glory—and covenants—and the law given to them from God himself:—upon their

divinely appointed services and sacrifices in the temple, and upon the great promises made to them (Rom. ix. 4). From the beginning of the Gospel Kingdom they were offended, and altogether opposed to the thought of admitting the Gentiles to equal privileges with themselves (Acts xxii. 21, 22). And this state of mind is represented by the angry feelings and conduct of the eldest son, to whom the father, in the parable, came out, and endeavoured, by entreaties, to persuade him to join in the rejoicing at the return of his younger brother. By this is shewn the earnest appeals which were made by the Spirit of God, through the apostles, to induce the Jews, as a nation, to join in the joy of the Gospel salvation; and to receive the Gentile Church as brethren, the offspring of the same Almighty Creator, long given up to rebellion and wickedness, but now returned to the Father's family, in the Lord Jesus Christ, "who hath made both one, and hath broken down the wall of partition," "that he might reconcile both unto God, in one body, by the Cross." (Eph. xii. 12, 18.) The consequences of the father's entreaties are not mentioned; the parable therefore does not describe any effect upon the Jewish nation, but leaves us under the circumstances which exist at the present time. The Christian church has been, and continues to be, gathered out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation: so that the Gentiles have turned to God from their idolatry and abominable sins, and such as shall be saved are being added by the Lord to the Church daily. (Acts ii. 47.) The Jews, as a nation, have been and continue to be offended at the thought of any being

saved except by the law of Moses. God still, through the Ministers of the Gospel, entreats and persuades this eldest son of His covenant to join in the Gospel joy of receiving all who come to God in Christ, and to unite with the younger brother—the Gentile Christians—in serving Him. This the Jews continue to reject; while, even to this moment, the divine entreaties are still put before them in various ways by the ministers of the Lord, who are sent to preach to them: and this is where the parable leaves the subject.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

I. In the usual way in which this parable is applied, its principal meaning is quite overlooked; and the story is, as it were, divided into two parts having no connexion with each other. The first and principal meaning of the parable is (as we have seen) the return of the Gentiles to God through Christ, and the proud rejection of that Saviour by the Jews. But after considering this, we may properly notice the common application as a *true* one; though not the *first truth* that is to be gathered from the story. That evil conduct and sad condition of the younger son, which describes the state of the whole Gentile world, describes also the state of each individual: and that coming to himself and turning of heart to his father, after which the prodigal was received again into the family, which describe the gathering of the Christian Church, from amongst the world that lieth in the wicked one, describe also the repentance of heart and tenderness of mercy,

experienced by each particular sinner. Whatever may be the various circumstances and degrees of sin, the remembrance of which brings shame upon a christian's heart; each can say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son:"—each desires to be made "as one of God's hired servants;"—each has felt the unmerited mercy of God in receiving him into his family, and can say "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Unless this be the case, there must be great reason to fear that we have not yet returned to God, but that we are in the service of that hard master Satan, the prince of the world, who employs his servants in sin, and whose wages is death. (Rom. vi. 23.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I sincerely acknowledge that I have sinned before God, and am not worthy to be called his son?

With what feelings do I make use of the words which express this, when I use the confession in Church?

Have I truly risen from my sinful desires and ways, and returned to God with my whole heart?

Am I sensible of God's great mercy and love, in receiving me through Christ Jesus?

2. In the same way that the conduct of the younger son may be practically applied to each true member of the Christian Church; so also the conduct of the elder son may afford a practical application to the case of those, who shew the same spirit towards great sinners who have returned to God with repentance, as the Jews did towards converted Gentiles. Many professed christians are even now greatly mistaken, as to the terms on which God is willing to receive and restore

even the greatest sinners. Their mistake (like that of the Jews) arises from a wrong notion concerning the Law. Such persons imagine that, whatever God may have done to facilitate the return of sinners, yet after all pardon very much depends upon the observance of the Commandments: and that, though God may forgive a great sinner who has broken the letter of these Commandments, yet such a one must still be kept at a distance, and only be taken into favour gradually as he may earn forgiveness by better behaviour; and, at best, that he can never stand upon the level with those, who have kept a moral course, without committing such actions as evidently break the Commandments. It is to be feared that there are a few nominal christians, who thus resemble the elder brother in the parable; who turn away from the truth of the Gospel, and take offence at the notion of that entire, full, free, and loving forgiveness, which God delights to afford, through Christ to every repentant sinner, however far he may have wandered from the way of holiness and peace. The Gospel represents God as One who "upbraideth not." (James i. 5.) "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespases unto them." (2 Cor. v. 19.) "Sinners being justified by faith have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v. 1, 2.) So far from keeping those who return to him at a distance, as it were, or forgiving them upon the conditions of good behaviour, God draws them to him by the blood of Christ at once; and ensures their future behaviour by such an entire

and generous forgiveness. To feel offended at this truth of the Gospel, is to turn, like the elder son, from the family of the compassionate Father, in the secret pride of a supposed superiority over our fellow-sinners.

QUESTIONS.

What are my feelings concerning the doctrine of God's free and entire forgiveness of those whose offences have been more evidently sinful than my own ?

Does the notion of such a forgiveness shock me ? and if so—why ?

Does it lead me to make comparisons between their sins and my own better conduct ?

Do I myself follow the example of the father in the parable, and forgive others frankly and generously, as soon as I have reason to think that they are repentant ?

3. The parable breaks off in an unfinished manner ; and without telling us the result, leaves the father in earnest entreaty with his eldest son, persuading him to come into the house and partake in the rejoicing upon the return of the younger. This seems to point out a duty to those who desire to be of the same mind with God. The parable describes both the gathering of the Gentiles, and the resistance of the Jews, as spoken of in Rom. x. 20, 21 ; and represents God as saying to the Jews, " All the day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gain-saying people." The Jews are not yet turned to God, and still continue in their proud and mistaken dependence on the Law. While the Scripture appeals to Christians, with especial reference to their condition, in these words, " How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without

a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" (Rom. x. 14, 15.) And as then, even so "at this present time also there is amongst them, a remnant according to the election of Grace;" (Rom. xi. 5,) and the heart of every Christian ought to feel desirous of promoting the conversion of these to the true Messiah; and to this end we ought to use every means in our power to send Missionaries among them, and to pray earnestly in their behalf; under the encouragement of that command of God "ye that make mention of the Lord," or "ye that are the Lord's remembrancers," (according to the margin of the Bible,) "keep not silence and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." (Isaiah lxii. 6, 7.)

QUESTIONS.

What are my feelings towards the Jews? Do I desire to make them partakers of the blessings I enjoy under the Gospel?

Do I pray for them? when? and with what perseverance?

What pains do I take in order to make them acquainted with the truth? Is it as much as I ought to do, or am able to do?

Or do I despise the Jews, and laugh at those who care for them, or neglect the subject altogether?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Thank God for the fulness and freeness of his forgiving love in Christ; and pray to be so taught by His Spirit, that you may rejoice in the return of sinners, and may readily and frankly pass by the faults of any who may have offended you, upon the first evidence that their hearts are altered.

3. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem;" and ask for a blessing on every endeavour to promote Christianity amongst the Jews.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O merciful God, who desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, send the Holy Spirit into my heart to

convince me of sin, and to draw me to thy throne of mercy, through Christ our Mediator; receive me for His sake, not imputing my trespasses to me, but accepting his precious blood-shedding as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for all my sins. (2) I praise and glorify Thy name, for the freeness of that salvation, which has been wrought for us by thy Son our Saviour, and for the tender love with which Thou forgivest and receivest sinners in Him. Let thy love be shed abroad in my heart by thine own Spirit, that I may ever rejoice in the return of any penitent sinner to Thy grace; and that I may freely forgive and as readily receive every one who may have offended me, as I would be received and forgiven by Thee. (3) I come to thee on behalf of thine ancient people Israel: take from them all ignorance and hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word;—send forth thy Spirit to gather into thy Church the remnant according to the election of thy grace;—affect the hearts of the whole people with a true repentance towards thee, and hasten the time when thou shalt again establish thy Jerusalem as a praise in the earth. I ask all to the glory of the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOURTH PORTION.

The unjust Steward.—*Parable, No. 19.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.*—Year 30.

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xvi. ver. 1 to 13.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE XVI. verse

8. the lord *means here* the master
done wisely acted with cleverness
in their generation for the concerns of
this present life
- 9, &c. mammon money
ye fail you are removed from
your stewardship

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

After having addressed the last parable to the Pharisees and Scribes, our Lord was pleased to deliver another parable ; which he spoke more particularly to his own disciples.

There was once (he said) a steward, belonging to a man of large property. Rich people in those days used to have a great number of servants and slaves, who all lived in the house with them. But to support them, instead of being fed at one

common table, each received a certain allowance of the necessaries of life, which was given to them once a week, or once a month, as it might be. To manage these supplies, every rich man employed a person called the ruler of the household, or steward; whose duty it was to contract for the proper articles, and distribute them to the different servants and slaves in the most provident manner. Somebody came and told this rich man, that the person whom he employed as his manager did not take proper care of his property, but allowed it to be squandered unjustly. The master sent for his steward, and asked how it happened that such an accusation could be brought against him. He desired him to get his accounts ready, and gave him warning to leave his service.

The steward began to turn in his mind what was best for him to do for his own benefit, now that his master had deprived him of his situation. He was not strong enough to gain his bread by field-labour, and he was ashamed to go about begging. After much consideration, he made up his mind how to act; in order that when he left his place, he might find some friends to take him into their families and keep him, in return for what he had done for their advantage while he was able to benefit them. He lost no time in putting his plan into execution; but sent for the contractors, who were under bond to supply his master's household with the regular allowances, for which they had probably already received the money. When the first of these came, he asked him, what it was his duty to supply the house with: the man told him, that his contract was for a hundred measures of oil, each of which was

about seven gallons and a half; (this was most likely what he had to send in weekly.) The steward looked out his bond; and, putting it before him, bid him make haste and alter the figures from a hundred to fifty. Then he turned to another, and asked what *he* had contracted for. The man told him, that he had to supply a hundred of the common measures of wheat; (each of which was a little more than thirty-two pecks,) the steward put this man's bond also before him, and bid him alter the account to eighty. By this means, although the contracts had been made for the larger quantities and the master's money paid accordingly, yet the contractors would only have to supply the smaller quantities every week, or month: and as the difference would be a great gain to them, they could afford to give a livelihood to the cunning but dishonest man, who had given them such an advantage. When the master of this steward heard this piece of deceit, he could not help saying that the man had acted very cleverly.

And no wonder, (Jesus said,) for people whose hearts are set upon this world, are in general, wiser in their way,—more prudent and skilful with respect to the things which advance them in this life,—than those persons are, who look beyond this world, and profess to be guided in their conduct by the light of heavenly hopes. He told the disciples that they ought to take a lesson from this dishonest cleverness of the steward; and to employ whatever portion of this world's goods it might please God to give them, in such a manner as to produce a like effect, with respect to the consequences that would happen to them,

whenever God should call them to account for the management of what he had entrusted them with. The cunning steward, looking forward to lose his office, considered how he might make friends who would afford him a home in this world; one which at best would only be for a little while. Jesus commanded his disciples to use even their worldly good things so as to secure the friendship of Him who, when they cease to be stewards of his bounty upon earth, can provide for them a home which shall endure for ever.

An expression is here made use of by our Lord "the mammon of unrighteousness" which it will be necessary to explain. The word mammon is taken from the name of a heathen idol—the god of money. Mammon, by itself, would only mean worldly goods; but "the mammon of unrighteousness" means to shew that the good things of this world are deceitful, and not to be relied upon. And it may also put us in mind how often money (the love of which is called by the Apostle "the root of all evil," 1 Tim. vi. 10,) is used by sinful men for purposes contrary to the righteous will of God; instead of being used for the glory and service of Him, to whom all riches belong; who alone places his bounties in the power of men, and will require all men to give an account of the way in which they have employed whatever they have received.

Our Lord proceeded to show his disciples that, according to their conduct as stewards of whatever God might trust to them in this world, would be their blessings in the world to come. If any one be trust-worthy in the management of his worldly goods, so as to use them for the glory of

God who places them in his charge; such a one being faithful in that which may well be called least, will also be faithful and trust-worthy in the glorious kingdom, "the inheritance of the saints in light;" which, as compared with the other, is called much. But if on the contrary a person employs the blessings of this life only for his own use and pleasure, without considering that they are to be used for the glory of Him to whom they belong, he can be considered no other than an unjust steward: and being unjust in the small things, of this present life, he would be so also in the greater things of the glorious kingdom. If therefore any one has neglected the service of God in the use of money, which is so constantly abused; how unseasonable it would be to expect, that the true riches of the eternal world should ever be placed in his hands. If, when tried as the steward of another's property, (which is the condition of every one possessed of this world's goods in this life) he is found unfaithful to the owner who entrusts him; how unreasonable it would be to expect that that master would bestow upon him an inheritance of his own, which is the reward of eternal glory.

Our Lord closed this application, by saying that no one person can be a servant to two different masters, whose service required opposite conduct. In such a situation he would either feel affection for the one, and hatred for the other: or supposing his feelings not to be so strong, he would at any rate shew his preference by following the orders of one, and neglecting the orders of the other. This applies to the service of God, and of the world. These two are so entirely opposed to

each other, that no one can possibly serve God, and at the same time follow the love of money.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture : see No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The parable in this portion has often been much misunderstood ; because it has been supposed by mistake, that the approval of the unjust steward was expressed by our Lord Jesus Christ. But this is not the case ; it is a part of the parable, that the master said that his steward was a very clever fellow, though he was a very dishonest man. What Christ said after delivering the parable, clearly proves that He strongly condemns the dishonesty of the man : though he points out the prudence of his conduct, in order to teach us to exercise a like prudence in the *honest* use of that which God bestows upon us, to be employed in his service. The great object of the parable is to make Christians remember, that whatever portion of this world's goods has fallen to their lot, it is only entrusted to them as stewards of God ; and whether it be little or much, it should be so employed as will tend to the glory of God. Though it is said, that in fact the children of this world are in their way more prudent than the children of light ; it is not to be supposed, that that God wishes his children to continue so. On the contrary, there is no reason why pious Christians should not be as thoughtful and diligent in making the most of their worldly advantages, for the spiritual benefit of themselves and others, as worldly people are for their own profit in this life.

This parable will serve to shew, what a mistake is made by those, who are satisfied with giving a very small portion of their living for charitable and religious purposes. Those who are the most wise in gaining money *for* themselves, often prove to be the most foolish in keeping it *to* themselves; instead of so using it for the glory of God, as will (by His grace) secure his friendship, and give us good hope that he will receive us into his own everlasting habitations. (Matt. vi. 19, 20. 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7. 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. Heb. vi. 10.) In the present day, there are so many Societies which undertake to receive from the smallest to the largest sums, and to employ the money upon all sorts of charitable and religious objects; that there can be no difficulty, in properly applying whatever we can spare. But all this makes it the more sinful, that any one should be satisfied with giving a penny a week, or a guinea a year, out of an income which is abundantly sufficient for his wants; thinking that he does enough in the sight of God, because he gives as much as the customs of the world require of him.

QUESTIONS.

If ever I have been puzzled about this parable, do I understand it more clearly now?

Have I ever compared the amount of the money which I spend in objects distinctly for the glory of God, with the *whole* amount of the living which God has entrusted to my stewardship? and what is the proportion?

To what good works do I contribute? what is the amount of my contributions to them? Is it enough, according to that account which God will one day require of me, as one of his stewards?

2. In closing the application of this parable, our Lord distinctly stated, that it is impossible for

any one to be a faithful servant of God, and at the same time to follow the service of this world. Ye cannot serve God and mammon ! This is explained, by shewing that every body will choose to serve the master whom they love. The love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10) ; while the love of God is the source of every good. (John xiv. 21, 23. 1 John ii. 5. Prov. viii. 17.) Nothing requires to be more narrowly watched, than those habits and feelings which grow in our hearts while we are striving to gain money. We begin perhaps with a very proper desire, to provide things honest in the sight of all men (Rom. xii. 17) ; or to help our children, or to increase our influence for good. But the pleasure which we find from what is called ‘making money,’ is so apt to draw the mind away from the service of Him, whose is the silver and the gold (Hag. ii. 8) ; that many a one, who began by meaning to keep steady in the service of God, has become before long a willing slave of mammon ; and perhaps without being aware of his condition. The snare that is laid for such persons generally leads them to suppose, that they can keep serving God very well, while they go on loving money. Against this error our Lord addresses these words “ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

QUESTIONS.

Am I endeavouring to lay by more than is really necessary ?

Does this object occupy much of my thoughts ?

Does it put aside the thoughts of my salvation, and of the love of Christ who died for my sins ?

Does it lead me to do doubtful things, which I am obliged to justify to my conscience by the customs of men ; though the word of God may seem to be against them ?

Which of the two am I really serving, God or money ?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray that you may have a Christian prudence, joined to a liberal spirit; that you may employ all the money you can spare, to the best advantage for the glory of God.

2. Pray to be preserved from the love of money, and to be watchful, as to the motives which make you ask to gain the advantages of this world.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O gracious God, from whom cometh every good gift to man; give me, I beseech thee, a spirit of wisdom, which may enable me to have a right judgment in all things. I ask thee especially to make me prudent and wise with the wisdom that is from above, in using those worldly benefits which Thy Providence has afforded me. Make me honest and just in all my dealings—careful to avoid waste—and watchful against the expences of self-indulgence; in order that I may be ready to give, and glad to distribute, according to the wisest plans that will promote thy glory. (2) Keep me from the grievous sin of loving money, and let me never bring forth the evil fruits of that evil root; but quicken my conscience to perceive the very beginnings of such covetous love, should it arise in my natural heart; and while I labour to provide things honest in the sight of all men, let me not engage in the service of mammon, but employ all my worldly gains in the service of Thee alone, my Lord and my God, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIFTH PORTION.

Jesus reproves the covetous Pharisees.—The rich man and Lazarus.—*Discourse, No. 23.—Parable No. 20.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME.—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of His Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap xvi. ver. 14 to 31.

III. THE MEANINGS;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xvi. verse

14. derided *means here* sneered at

17. tittle smallest part

19. sumptuously in a costly manner

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

Our Lord had addressed the parable of the unjust steward to his own disciples (Luke xvi. 1); but some of the Pharisees were present and heard what he said. They being very fond of money, (against the love of which the parable was directed) sneered at what he had said. Upon this Jesus told them, that they belonged to a class of persons who made themselves appear righteous according to the judgment of men; but the judgment of God reached to the knowledge of the heart. The two judgments are besides very different; for many things, which men approve of and praise highly, are considered very wicked in the judgment of God.

The Pharisees prided themselves upon their keeping exactly the Law of Moses. Jesus therefore told them, that since the time when John the Baptist began to preach, the law of Moses had given way to the establishment of the Gospel, (called the Kingdom of God.) This was now proclaimed; and (as he had said to his disciples upon a former occasion, Matt. xi. 12): people were now striving to enter in. By saying this, he seems to have pointed out to the Pharisees their error, in clinging still to the outward fulfilment of the Law, when people in general were opening their eyes to the Gospel. Yet he assured them, that the Gospel itself was the complete fulfilling of the Law, though not in their mistaken sense of outward forms; for the law of the Old Testament, being the truth of God himself, could not fail of being fulfilled: it was as sure as the laws of nature, established by the same God. The earth and sky might therefore sooner come to nothing, than the smallest portion of the truth of God's law pass away without being fulfilled. (Matt. v. 17, 18.)

There was one part of the law of God, which the Pharisees rendered completely of none effect by their own rules, although they pretended to be outwardly so strict in keeping the law. They were in the habit of changing their wives whenever they wished to take another woman, by giving a writing of divorcement (as it was called) upon the slightest occasion. (Matt. v. 31, 32; see vol. i., page 267.) But our Lord repeated now, what he had before said in the Sermon on the mount, that a person who thus rendered the law of marriage of no use by changing his wife, although according to a customary form, was in fact committing the crime

of adultery ; and if a man, who had not put away his wife for the purpose, were to marry a woman thus sent away by her husband, he would thereby commit the same crime.

It seems that our Lord gave this instance of the double-dealing of the Pharisees, as one among many in which, while they followed the customs of men, they were doing that which was abominable in the sight of God, who knew all the secret feelings which influenced them ; however they might justify their conduct to the world upon other motives. This he had reproved them for, when they sneered at him because he exposed the sinfulness of their love of riches. To this subject he now returned ; addressing to them a parable, which applied to their case the same principle as the other parable of the unjust steward.

There was a very rich man, who used to indulge himself in all sorts of luxuries ; he wore the best and the gayest clothing, and indulged daily in all kinds of good cheer. It happened that in the same town where this man lived there was a beggar, whose name was Lazarus. He suffered so dreadfully from disease that he could not walk ; but he used to be brought and set down at the outer court of this rich man's house to beg ; and he would have been satisfied with the crumbs and broken morsels that were cast away as of no account after the rich man's meals. He was so helpless and deserted that the very dogs in the street used to lick the sores of his body. In this condition the beggar died : and as soon as the spirit had left his body, some of the angels of God (Heb. i. 14) carried his soul to that place of departed spirits where those who are the chil-

dren of God remain in happiness until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. (Luke xxiii. 42, 43.) Here the spirit of Abraham, the father of the faithful (Gal. iii. 6, 7), received him with the rejoicing of love; which is expressed by Abraham's embracing him, or receiving him to his bosom.

After the death of Lazarus, "the rich man also died, and was buried;" no doubt with a very grand funeral. We next hear of him too in the place of departed spirits, called Hades (see vol. iii. page 186); but in that division of it where those are kept, who are afterwards to depart from the Lord "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.) Here, whilst suffering torment, he saw a long way off (in the other division of Hades) the spirit of Abraham in blessed communion with the spirit of Lazarus. He immediately called out to Abraham as his father; and begged him to take pity on his miserable condition, and to let Lazarus come and give him the least possible relief: which is expressed by his entreating that Lazarus might only dip the tip of his finger in water and put it on his tongue, which was parched by the agony he was suffering from the fire that was about him.

Abraham answered the wretched man, by acknowledging him indeed as his son; but bidding him remember that, whilst yet alive, he had received his full share of those good things in which he had delighted, and which was the portion he had chosen. (Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16.) On the other hand Lazarus had, during his life-time, received his full share of distresses. During their life-time, both had had an opportunity of choosing in which

world they would have their happiness: the rich man had taken his share in the present world, and Lazarus had sought his happiness in the world to come, and had taken up his cross in his life-time. Now matters were changed:—Lazarus was comforted, looking forward to the enjoyment he had chosen; and the rich man was tormented, expecting the misery which was the consequence of his own choice.

From this it was plain that the case of each was settled, so that it was useless to hope that Lazarus could be of any use in relieving him. But besides, (Abraham said) there was no possibility of trying to do him any good; for, though they were both in the place of departed spirits, yet they were in different divisions of it; and between the two there was a deep gulf, so as to prevent the possibility of any of those who were in happiness going over to those who were in misery, even if they should wish; and also to prevent those who were in misery from coming to the others who were in happiness.

The rich man, finding that there could be no help for those who have left this world without choosing the "good part" (Luke x. 42), then entreated Abraham to send the spirit of Lazarus back to this world, upon a message to his kindred. The rich man had five brothers still living; and he wished that the spirit of Lazarus should go and warn them to turn from the service of the world, in which both he and they had delighted, in order that they might be saved from coming into the place of torment, in which he himself was suffering. Abraham told him that his brothers had many an opportunity of hearing the warnings of the word

of God himself, which had been written in the books of Moses and the Prophets; and that they must take heed to those Scriptures. Upon this the unhappy rich man told Abraham, that all that was very true, but neither he nor they had paid proper attention to the Scriptures. If however the spirit of a person who had left the world were to return and give them a warning, then surely (he thought) they would attend to such a call, and turn unto God. Abraham however told him that he was mistaken; if people did not pay attention to the word of God, they were not in a state of mind to repent, even if they received a warning from the ghost of one appearing to them after death.

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. It is not uncommon for sinners when stung by the force of truth, to pretend to despise the doctrine which condemns them, and to sneer at the person who puts it forth. This was the way the Pharisees met the parable of our Lord, which exposed the evil of their ruling passion, the love of money. Hereby they shewed the effect that the word of Jesus had produced; and brought upon themselves the reproof, for pretending to keep the law of God, whilst, in reality, they acted altogether with a view to the opinions of men. The same effect is often produced now; when the truth of the Gospel, faithfully preached, cannot be denied by some one who hears it, and finds it condemns his besetting sins, which nevertheless are tolerated by the customs of the world. In such cases a sneer, and a bitter taunt or jest, may

easily be thrown at the preacher : but any who are really acquainted with the Gospel, and with the human heart, will surely discover the real state of heart in persons who thus mock at truth, proving that, though they may be respectable in society, and approved before men, they are not right with God, who knoweth the heart. (See also the third application of the fifty-seventh portion, vol. ii., page 132.)

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever feel inclined to treat a preacher with contempt, or to laugh at him, on account of the doctrine he preaches ?

Are those doctrines opposed to sin of any kind ?

Have I ever committed the sin he was preaching against ? or am I likely to fall into it ?

Do I ever join in the laugh with others, who speak with ridicule or contempt of the doctrine of the Gospel ?

2. To apply the doctrine contained in verse 18 of this portion, read the second application of the thirty-second portion, vol. i., page 270.

3. Our Lord had been delivering the parable of the dishonest steward : and in this portion he shews the terrible consequences of that real dishonesty and unfaithfulness to God which employs the money entrusted to our stewardship by the great Giver as if it were our own. The rich man in the parable, is not charged with getting his money improperly, nor with spending it for wicked purposes ; his sin was self-indulgence. The difference between him and the beggar was not so much that one had plenty and the other nothing in this life, as that one set his heart upon this life, and the other did not. The one, having the trial of his faith made by riches, made choice of the things of this present time, as the objects of his desire and his happiness : and “ verily he had

his reward"—he took his share of good things; and, though he made a foolish bargain (Matt. xvi. 26), yet he received the full amount of what he had a right to expect. It was all to be enjoyed in this life, and had no promise of the next. When therefore he departed this life, then came the just consequences of his bargain—he lost his soul;—he had his evil things; and alas! he has them still—and will have them to all eternity. Lazarus on the other hand, having the trial of his faith by poverty and want, did not seek to alter his portion by dishonesty and resistance to the will of God; but, by submission and patience, he shewed that he waited God's time for giving the good things; while he piously consented to the large portion of evil things which were assigned to him by the loving, and therefore chastening, hand of his Almighty Father. (Heb. xi. 5—7. Rev. iii. 19. 1 Peter i. 6. 7; iv. 12, 13.) In due season he received his good things too, there where he had reason to expect them:—not indeed in this life, which was, at any rate, but of short continuance, but in that life where his happiness shall never change: he is receiving it even now; and when, at the coming of the Lord, it shall be increased, (Rom. viii. 23. Phil. 20, 21. 1 John iii. 2,) he will continue to enjoy that happiness to all eternity.

QUESTIONS.

In which life do I desire to have my portion? and where are my affections set?

Have I heartily chosen Christ to be my Saviour so that, I may look to be with him in the life to come?

Am I willing to bear any evil thing which may be brought upon me in this life, rather than deny Christ by sin, or by being ashamed to profess his name?

5. We may gather an important lesson from this parable, by observing that the person who was

himself suffering unchangeable torments, wished to warn his relations, of the danger they were in of going to hell by their worldly, self-indulgent course of life. If this unhappy man had but thought in his life-time of the warning, which he was afterwards so anxious to send to others, he would not only himself have entered into the narrow way which leadeth to life; but he would have had many opportunities of doing what was now impossible, that is, of urging those whom he loved to turn to God while there was yet time. Very many there are, who though aware of the danger of their relations and friends, neglect to warn them. They seem not to feel the love of Christ to be so strong a motive with them as the suffering of God's anger was with this man: for he would not have let his friends alone to perish, if he could by any means have spoken to them; whereas they shrink from using even the ordinary means, which lie within their reach. Those means (we learn from the parable) are quite as powerful and availing, as would be the appearance of one risen from the grave; and therefore we are the less excusable if we do not make use of them.

QUESTIONS.

Are there any with whom I am connected whom I feel to be going on in a worldly way of self-indulgence, which is likely to lead to condemnation in the life to come? If there is, what have I done to warn them of their danger?

Have I been hindered from speaking to them by the fear of offending them? or the danger of losing their favour, or some advantage connected with it?

If so, is not this choosing ease and advantage in this world, in preference to the service of God and the good of others?

5. This parable gives us one of the strongest testimonies, that in the Scriptures we have all that is necessary to convince the mind of the truth of the doctrines of salvation. The con-

demned sinner thought that, if a message were sent from the world of spirits by the ghost of one who had died, it would surely produce conviction: but he was told, that those who were then living had the Old Testament, which was quite enough; and that a proper attention to that blessed book would shew them the way to avoid the eternal punishment. Any person, who was not convinced by the Scriptures, was not in a state of mind to be convinced even by a message from the grave. If the Old Testament were enough for a Jew, both to convince him in this life, and also to convict him hereafter; how much more will it be the case with us, who have both the Old and the New. In the New Testament we have a greater witness than any of the departed saints; Jesus Christ returned to this world, after having passed through death. As a living man, he conversed with the men whom he sent forth to declare the truth of his resurrection; and their words have come to us; so that we have all the benefit which the rich man wished to give his brethren. And yet many persons have proved the truth, that those who do not believe Moses and the Prophets will not give credit to one risen from the dead. In fact, the cause of disbelief of God's word, does not lie in the understanding, though it often seems to do so. The root of the matter is in the heart; and it is because people do not *like* the doctrines of the Bible, that they try to bring forward arguments to oppose it.

QUESTIONS.

Have I any doubts as to whether the Bible is all true?

Do I think that, if I had greater evidence about it, I should have no doubt?

Do I heartily wish to find the way of salvation to be such as it is stated in the Scriptures?

Are there not some parts that I should like to alter a little ? and then would there be any doubt on my mind whether it was true ?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray to be kept from resisting your conscience, and ridiculing against those truths which you secretly feel to be opposed to the sins of your own heart.

2. Pray for grace to choose the good part, which shall not be taken from you in this life, and will secure your happiness in the life to come : and for courage to warn others while there is time of the importance of making the same choice.

3. Pray for simplicity of faith to receive the truth of God to the saving of your soul.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O merciful God, quicken my conscience to receive the reproofs of thy word in all humility ; keep me from despising or deriding those whom thou employest to lay open to myself the sins of my heart. Enlighten my understanding that I may know the folly of self-indulgence, and defend me from those temptations which might lead me to squander the means Thy Providence affords me, in gratifying my worldly desires. Make me to set my affections on things above, not on things on the earth ; and so to choose my portion, that the good things of the eternal life may be mercifully assigned me. Give me such a just alarm for those who have not yet fixed their choice on the heavenly inheritance, that I may never be deterred by any motive whatsoever from warning them of their danger : help me, I pray thee, to do this especially to those whom thy Providence has placed within the influence of the natural affections towards me ; that so I may be blessed to them in the concerns of their souls. (2) Lord, I beseech thee to affect my heart with a real desire to receive the truth of thy Scriptures in the love of it ; so that my mind may readily acknowledge the doctrines of thy word, and my heart rejoice in them, to the saving of my soul, for Jesus Christ's sake. AMEN.

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SIXTH PORTION.

Jesus teaches of ensnaring in sin ; of faith ; and that there is no favour in doing duty. He heals ten lepers.—*Discourse, No. 24.—Miracle, No. 36.*

PLACE—*Galilee.* TIME—*Less than two months before His death.—Year 30.*

I. BEGINNING PRAYER.

MAY GOD, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, give me the HOLY SPIRIT, that I may understand this portion of his Holy Word, and profit by it. AMEN.

II. THE SCRIPTURE.

Read St. Luke's Gospel, chap. xvii. ver. 1 to 19.

III. THE MEANINGS ;

or sense of some words as used in this portion.

LUKE xvii. verse

1. offences *means here* causes of offence—snares
6. sycamine tree ... a particular kind of tree
 that grows only in Lower Galilee
- trow ... suppose

IV. THE EXPLANATION.

In the course of his instruction our Lord repeated to his disciples the remark he had made at Capernaum about a twelvemonth before, when they were disputing amongst themselves, who was to be the greatest in His kingdom. (Matt. xviii. 1—7; vol. iii. 274.) It is impossible, that snares which lead people to offend God should not occur ; but fearful will be the case of those, who are the occasion of such offences. The punishment of any person who wilfully ensnares one of the weakest of Christ's disciples into an offence, shall be so

dreadful, that it would have been a better thing for him: to have been drowned like a dog, with a great stone round his neck, rather than have brought that punishment upon himself. (Mark ix. 42; vol. iii., page 261.) This certainty that snares will be laid, makes it the more necessary that Christians should be upon their guard, and take care how they walk, where there is so great a likelihood of stumbling.

To give an instance how the heart is often ensnared into unchristian anger, by the provoking conduct of another, and to point out the manner in which a disciple of Jesus should avoid the snare; our Lord referred to the question formerly put to him by Peter, concerning the degree to which forgiveness ought to be carried, and repeated the instruction he then gave. (Lev. xix. 17, 18. Matt. xviii. 15—35, vol. iii. pages 288 & 297.) Whenever we are injured or offended by any person, we are, in the first place, to shew him his error, and to reprove him with faithful kindness. (Heb. iii. 13.) If upon this he confesses himself in the wrong, we are immediately to give him a free forgiveness. And if this should occur over and over again seven times in the same day, a Christian must forgive such an offender, even as many times as he acknowledges his fault; not allowing him to wear out our patience, but thus overcoming evil with good.

When the Apostles heard this, they asked him to enable them to be more believing than they felt they were: probably feeling how difficult it was for them to practise such a degree of forgiveness. This shews that they had more fully learnt to look upon him in his divine character; since

none but God could have power to give the gift of faith. In answer to this, the Lord repeated the same strong statement that he had made, when they had before enquired of him, after the transfiguration, why they could not cast out the devil from the possessed child. (Matt. xvii. 19, 20.) He illustrated the power of faith, by comparing it (as before) to a grain of mustard-seed, and supposing it to be exercised in commanding a tree to be torn up by the roots and transplanted into the sea: whereas in the former case, it was the removing of a mountain into a valley that he supposed. To understand his present answer, the explanation given of the former one should be referred to; it will be found in the hundred and second portion, vol. iii., page 233.

Perhaps the apostles thought it a work of great merit to shew such forbearance as Jesus required of his disciples. If so, our Lord corrected this mistaken notion, adding to his description of faith another comparison. He put this case:—suppose one of them had happened to be a farmer, and, after going about the fields all day, had come home with a labourer who had been driving plough or attending to the stock,—would he say to that labourer,—“sit down to your supper first?” Would he not say on the contrary, “go and bring my supper, and wait on me till I have done, and then you shall have your meal afterwards?” And when the servant had done as he was told, would the master consider himself under an obligation to the man for his services?—“Surely not,” said our Lord. Then he applied the comparison to the obedience required of us:—when a Christian shall have done, to the very utmost,

whatever God commands, he must remember that in so doing, he has conferred no favour—he has only fulfilled his proper duty.

Jesus was still journeying onward towards Jerusalem (see page 161); and had now come to the very end of lower Galilee, at that part where it touches upon Samaria. As he was going into a village thereabouts, it happened that ten unhappy men afflicted with the leprosy were walking towards him, keeping at a distance from their fellow men, according to the law. A particular account was given of this disease and of the law concerning it, in the forty-fourth portion; upon the first occasion on which Jesus healed a leper. (Matt. viii. 2—4. &c. &c. vol. ii., page 10.) This account should be read now in order to understand the present miracle.

When these ten lepers saw Jesus, they cried out to him, calling him by name as their master or Lord, and entreated him to have mercy upon them, and heal them. Jesus bid them go to the priests, and shew themselves; which was what persons cleansed from the leprosy were required to do by the law. (Lev. xiv. 2, 3, 11.) They were still suffering from the disease; but when he desired them to go to the priests, they all set out for that purpose at once. On their road they found that their leprosy left them; so that, by the time they came to the priests, they were in the proper state to be declared “cleansed.”

One of these lepers, as soon as he found the miracle which had been done upon him, immediately expressed his thankfulness to God by speaking loudly of his praise; and instead of going on to the priests, he turned back again to find Jesus.

When he came near him, he put his face on the ground in token of worship, and gave him thanks for the mercy that he had shewn him. This man was not a Jew, but one of the people of Samaria. Jesus asked whether all the ten lepers had not received the same benefit, and been healed? and if so, what had become of the other nine? Out of all that were cleansed, there was but one who had come back to give the glory where it was due; and he was a foreigner, who had not been brought up as one of God's people. Jesus then shewed, the great distinction between that kind of faith which had induced the nine men to go to the priests at his word, (and so fitted them to receive the bodily healing) and that real faith coupled with love, (1 Cor. xiii. 2; see vol. iii., p. 229) through which is worked that greater miracle, the healing of the soul from the leprosy of sin. He bid this man go home; telling him that *his* faith (as distinguished from that of the other men) had brought upon him the true healing. (Matt. ix. 2—8. Luke vii. 48—50.)

V. THE REPETITION.

Now read again the Scripture: See No. II.

VI. THE APPLICATION.

1. The duty of Christian watchfulness in our conduct lest we should give occasion for sin in others, is here very strongly pointed out. Doubtless every sinner is justly chargeable with his own offences against God; and he will be condemned for them, unless he avails himself of that atonement which Christ has made for them. But this only increases the fearful responsibility of those who, through sinful negligence or selfish disregard of another's weakness, become the occasion of

exciting sin in him; when the stumbling-block, over which he fell, could by any means have been taken out of the way, without denying Christ, or acting inconsistently with his word. A true Christian will be induced by love for his fellow-sinners to forego many things which he might otherwise enjoy, rather than put "an occasion to fall" in the way of another. (Rom. xiv. 13—23. 1 Cor. viii. 9—13.) In the case however referred to by our Lord the occasion of fall is caused by those who are enemies to Christ's cause. The "Woe" declared against such is very terrible: and at the same time the certainty that there will always be found ungodly persons, ready to draw into sin those who make a religious profession, should be a continued motive to great watchfulness that we may avoid the snares thus laid for us.

QUESTIONS.

In following any course of conduct do I take into consideration, whether it is likely to be the occasion of sin in others?

Am I willing to practise self-denial, in order to avoid this?

Am I careful to distinguish between sacrificing Christian principle, and giving up my own gratification, for such an object?

Am I watchful over my own conduct, lest I be drawn into sin by the snares of worldly company?

2. With respect to the duty of forgiveness, the following applications of former portions should be referred to. The seventh application of the 36th portion, vol. i. p. 310; the first and second application of the 108th portion, vol. iii. pages 286 and 287; and the application to the 109th, vol. iii. page 301.

3. With respect to the nature of the faith spoken of in this portion, the third application of the 102nd portion should be referred to, volume iii. page 239.

4. It is not uncommon for the human heart to pride itself upon acts of duty and obedience to God, which are plainly such as he requires of us. This feeling is excited by comparing what we have done that is good, not with the commandments of God, but with the usual practice of men, and it leads directly to the mistaken notion, that such acts of duty are meritorious in themselves, and may claim praise and reward from God. That men should praise and reward those who evidently conduct themselves better than others, is not to be wondered at; but it is altogether unreasonable to expect, that should produce the same effect with God. He having made man upright and having shewn him since what is good, and what He requires of him, has a right to a much more complete obedience than was ever shewn by the best of the sons of Adam. A whole life spent in the active exercise of every virtue, would deserve the thanks of society in general; because every approach to such a life is so far a benefit, in counteracting the evils which men suffer through sin. But the person, whose life comes nearest to such a state, will assuredly be the readiest to acknowledge, that all he has done has fallen far short of what God requires us to do. Nay, even suppose his endeavours to serve God had been entirely without sin (which no human endeavours are or could be), even then his life would only be what God might justly expect it to have been: and therefore he could have no *claim* even to thanks from Him; much less to a reward, as for a benefit conferred over and above what was due. (Rom. v. 4, 5; xi. 6. Gal. v. 4. Eph. ii. 8, 9.) Those who live the best lives have

therefore great reason to be humbled for their sins and short-comings in God's sight: to pride ourselves upon what is but our duty, shews that we judge our actions by the opinions of men rather than by the rule of God's commandments.—Foolish as such pride must always be, there is a greater and more sinful folly still. The Papists, (misguided people, who follow the Pope or Bishop of Rome) are taught to believe, that certain men and women—those declared by his authority to be glorified as saints,—not only fulfilled all that God required of them; but that besides this they did so many good works, more than was necessary to secure their own reward in heaven, that they could afford to spare the benefit of them to be set to the account of some of those sinners upon earth who may happen to come short of the necessary quantity of goodness in their own persons. The merit of all these extra good works of the saints, is supposed to be added altogether, as a treasure given to the church. “It has been pretended that this was of the nature of a bank of which the Pope was the keeper; and that he could grant such bills and assignments upon it as he pleased.” It is upon this unscriptural supposition that the Pope presumes to give what he calls *Indulgences*: that is, he pretends to strike off the punishment of some sins in persons who get the indulgence, by putting some of the merit of these good works to the account of the sinner. These indulgences used to be sold for money; until the scandal became so great, that it was the first thing which roused people, about three hundred years ago, to exercise their common sense and read the Bible; in consequence of

which so many cast aside the wicked falsehoods of the Roman Catholic religion, and became Protestant members of the true Church of Christ. These indulgences are not now sold for money, in the manner they formerly were: but they still continue to be granted by the Pope every year, upon condition that the persons receiving them should do certain things, more or less painful and difficult; such as attending a certain number of services, repeating so many hundred prayers over and over again, taking a journey to kneel before the image of a certain saint, and such like. Notices of these indulgences are put up in places of Romish worship to this day, all grounded upon the false imagination of the extra merit of the good works of the saints which are called "works of supererogation," according to some pretended "counsels of perfection," which the Romanists are taught to believe. All this system of deceit is plainly condemned by the words of Jesus Christ, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do."

QUESTIONS.

Do I ever pride myself upon my good conduct?

If I do, have I compared that conduct with the obedience which God expects from me?

While I strive to do my best to live according to His word, am I humbled with a sense of the great short-coming even in my best works?

5. With respect to the subject of lepers, and leprosy, the first and third applications of the forty-fourth portion should be referred to; vol. ii., page 16.

6. In the account of the miracle performed by Christ upon the ten lepers, a very remarkable

distinction may be observed between the faith of the nine, who went to shew themselves to the priest and were healed, and the better faith of the Samaritan, who returned to worship our Lord for the benefit which he had received from him. The nine received the cure of their bodily disease, but an additional and greater blessing was given to the returning leper; such (we may conclude) as was bestowed upon the man with the palsy, and the woman in the house of Simon—even the forgiveness of sins. A like difference may be observed now, between those who are brought by nominal religion into a decent conformity with moral rules, and real Christians, who, besides being kept in outward propriety of conduct, ascribe glory to Christ, in earnest and open acknowledgement of what he has done for them. There is a vast difference between decency and spirituality. The one leads people to submit to religious forms, because they are appointed and customary; the other draws the heart to Christ himself in all ordinances, and before all forms of worship. By a diligent attendance upon outward means, strict morality may be persevered in; and sometimes a change may be made from gross sin, to a respectable life: but this is very different from that glad receiving of the word, after conviction of sin (Acts ii. 37, 41), which leads the converted sinner to the feet of Jesus, in heartfelt thankfulness for that turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, which by divine grace he has received.

QUESTIONS.

Am I sensible of any alteration that has been made in my heart and life, by faith in Christ's atonement for my sins?

Do I rest satisfied with having partaken of the outward form of baptism? or have I sought, and do I acknowledge the special mercy of the Lord Jesus?

How do I manifest my thanks to him for His mercy and grace? is it in such a way as warrants the hope, that my faith hath made me whole from the leprosy of the love of sin?

VII. HEADS FOR PRAYER.

1. Pray for a spirit of christian watchfulness over yourself; so that you may neither be the means of ensnaring others into sin, nor fall into snares which the conduct of others might place in your way?

2. Pray for humility, so as to receive the approbation of men without the danger of forgetting, how God looks upon the best of our good works: and thank Him that you are preserved from the deceits of Romanism.

3. Pray to be continually kept in a state of spiritual life; not being satisfied with formal privileges and moral decency, but constantly giving thanks to Jesus Christ for his spirit, and living to the glory of his name.

VIII. THE PRAYER.

(1) O Merciful God, who desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; give me, I pray thee, a knowledge of my own weakness, and a careful alarm at the danger of sin. Lead me to deny myself any enjoyment rather than be the occasion of offence to any who are seeking thy salvation; guard me from any temptations which may overcome my watchfulness, and make me fall into the snares which worldly men may spread for me. (2) Make me humble in my own conceit; so that, if men praise me, I may remember how unprofitable a servant I have been to thee, and may continually compare my life and conduct with the rule of thy commandments. I acknowledge how unworthy I am of the least of all thy mercies, and beseech thee to pardon for Christ's sake the iniquity of my holy things. I thank thee, gracious God,

that in this day of blasphemy and rebuke, when (according to thy word) men are departing "from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." — I have been preserved hitherto from the evil devices of the church of Rome, in the true faith of thy holy word : continue thy merciful preservation over me, that I may never be deceived by their false and subtle devices. (3) Give me the blessing of true spiritual life, even that godliness which is profitable unto all things. Let me not be satisfied with the mere words of my lips ; but teach me ever to give thee thanks, Lord Jesus, not only with my lips, but in my life ; by giving myself up to thy service, and by walking before Thee all my days, to thy honour and glory. AMEN.

Our Father, &c.

NOTICE to the Reader at the close of the fourth
Volume of the Cottager's Guide to the New
Testament.

VOLUME IV.

By taking a general view of that portion of our Lord's history contained in this Volume, we find that it occupies about five months and brings us to within a few weeks of his crucifixion.

Our Lord left CAPERNAUM, and went to JERUSALEM to the feast of Tabernacles; at which he delivered much instruction publicly in the temple.—This occupies from the 110th to the 118th portions.

During an interval of two months after this nothing is recorded of our Lord's history, except that he left JERUSALEM; He probably passed that time at CAPERNAUM.

He then went again to JERUSALEM at the feast of the Dedication; whence he was driven by an attempt to stone him, and he returned beyond the river JORDAN.—This is related in the 119th portion.

Jesus was called from hence to BETHANY by the death of Lazarus, but having raised him to life, the Pharisees determined to kill our Lord which induced him to retire to EPHRAIM.—Portions 120 and 121.

Here he remained till about two months before his death, when he determined to set forth on his last journey to JERUSALEM. Accordingly he travelled first through SAMARIA into GALILEE; sending forth 70 disciples before him, and then journeying round that country for the last time. From this time he made no further attempts at being kept from public notice; but took his journey openly towards JERUSALEM, attracting great attention in his progress. Many particulars of his discourses, parables, and miracles are given, and the account of the journey is carried on to the moment when he is about to pass the borders of LOWER GALILEE into PERÆA.—This occupies from the 122nd to the 146th portion.

A statement of the PLACE at which the events related in the several portions occurred; and of the TIME at which the principal circumstances happened.

PORTION	PLACE	YEAR 29.
<i>One hundred and ten</i>	{ Capernaum and	6 months be-
<i>One hundred and eleven</i>	Jerusalem	fore his death
<i>One hundred and twelve</i>	Jerusalem	"
<i>One hundred and thirteen</i>	"	"
<i>One hundred and fourteen</i>	{ The Temple at	"
<i>One hundred and fifteen</i>	Jerusalem	"
<i>One hundred and sixteen</i>	Jerusalem	"
<i>One hundred and seventeen</i>	{ The Temple at	"
<i>One hundred and eighteen</i>	Jerusalem	"
	Jerusalem	"
	"	"
	"	"
<i>One hundred and nineteen</i>	{ Jerusalem, then	
	on the banks of	about 4 months
	the Jordan	
YEAR 30.		
<i>One hundred and twenty</i>	Bethany	about 3 months
<i>One hundred and twenty-one</i>	Jerusalem—Ephraim	"
<i>One hundred and twenty-two</i>	Samaria	about 2 months
<i>One hundred and twenty-three</i>	Capernaum	"
<i>One hundred and twenty-four</i>	"	less than 2 months
<i>One hundred and twenty-five</i>	"	"
<i>One hundred and twenty-six</i>	{ Galilee	"
to		
<i>One hundred and forty-six</i>		

A list of the different Texts which are referred to in the course of this volume, put down in the order in which they come in the Bible ; so that the reader may turn to the page put opposite to each text in this list, and he will find out something which will help to explain that part of Scripture. By the use of this list much may be learnt concerning many other parts of the Bible, besides those which are the principal subjects of the explanation.

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